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MEANING MAKING AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENT CRIME

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THCMAN001

**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Social Science
in Clinical Psychology**

Faculty of Humanities

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2007

DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to the ten people who agreed to talk to me about their experiences of violent crime. I am grateful to them not only for their participation and time, but also for their honesty about some of the difficult issues that emerged during the course of the interviews.

Detective Penso and the Survivors of Crime service at Rondebosch Police Station for allowing me access to the participants. A special thanks to Detective Penso and Nicky for their help during the difficulties in the recruitment phase.

Supervisor, Debbie Kaminer, for sharing her knowledge and expertise and for her encouragement throughout the research process.

The National Research Fund (NRF) for their financial contribution towards my Master's Degree.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the meaning attributions, in terms of comprehensibility and significance, held by South African crime survivors in relation to the traumatic event, and to see if existing international research on meaning making and posttraumatic growth (PTG) was relevant in the South African context. A qualitative multiple case study approach was employed. Semi structured interviews were conducted with ten violent crime survivors in Cape Town. The interviews were recorded and transcripts analyzed using strategies from grounded theory. Five broad thematic areas were identified: (1) disrupted schema (2) precursors to meaning making (3) meaning making strategies (4) grappling with meaning and (5) areas of significance/benefit or posttraumatic growth. While some themes reflected previous findings in the international trauma literature, others appeared to be context-specific. The results imply several recommendations for future research and clinical practice with survivors of violent crime in South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, but particularly in South Africa, individuals stand a chance of being victims of a violent crime (Fattah, 1997; Louw, 1997). Individuals react to such violent crime with varying degrees of immediate and long-term distress. An ongoing question is how to intervene with survivors of crime in order to mitigate some of this distress. Despite high levels of violent crime in South Africa, there is very little local research into the psychological impact of crime on survivors in South Africa. This results in a lack of theory and empirical findings on which to base interventions for crime survivors in a South African context.

The psychological impact of many other types of trauma has been documented. Current research indicates that coping successes, rather than failures, are the norm and that it is only in a small minority of individuals that chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other psychiatric symptoms do occur (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Traditionally, posttraumatic adjustment has been accounted for in terms of vulnerability and resilience (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996). Kelley (2004) and Bonanno (2004) however, state that human resilience, or the capacity to return to a previous level of functioning following trauma, is under-theorized.

Since the 1980's, and increasingly in the 1990's, theorists have suggested that meaning making and posttraumatic growth (PTG) are important aspects of post trauma recovery (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). It has been suggested that the ability to make meaning and to achieve posttraumatic growth (PTG) may mitigate posttraumatic stress symptomology. Some recent studies indicate that, while negative symptoms such as intrusive thoughts may continue to occur, depression is decreased and positive affect is enhanced following meaning making and posttraumatic growth (Helgeson, Reynolds & Tomich, 2006; Park & Helgeson, 2006).

According to existing meaning making theories, humans have a conceptual system that provides expectations about the world and themselves. This conceptual system is comprised of organized cognitive structures or schemas that serve as frames of reference on which to base the processing of information and understanding of the

world. Trauma may shatter these schemas, which need to be rebuilt in order to facilitate posttraumatic adjustment (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Janoff-Bulman & McPherson, 1997; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The re-working of schemas or assumptions after trauma entails a process of meaning making.

Two types of meaning making have been identified. The first aspect of meaning making is termed comprehensibility. This involves developing an explanatory account of the trauma, of how and why it happened. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) interventions for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder recognize the importance of working with cognitive meaning attributions, such as self-blame, and modifying such attributions with more helpful attributions in order to affect change in the pathological trauma structure (Foa & Rothbaum, 1998). However, research trends are increasingly pointing towards the capacity not only for adjustment back to a pre-morbid level of functioning but for growth and development following trauma (Joseph & Linley, 2004). Thus the second type of meaning making entails identifying the significance or purpose of a traumatic event (Janoff-Bulman & McPherson, 1997; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). This type of meaning making may result in posttraumatic growth (PTG), which is defined as a movement towards better functioning as a result of the traumatic experience (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

While meaning making, and its role in PTG, has been noted by researchers studying reactions to a wide range of traumas e.g. (Bower, Kemeny, Taylor & Fahey, 1998; Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1989- 1990; Fontana & Rosenheck, 2005; Joseph, Williams & Yule, 1993; Park, Cohen & Murch, 1996; Tennen, Affleck, Urrows, Higgins & Mendola, 1992), there is little such research with survivors of violent crime. In particular, there is a lack of qualitative data regarding the typical meaning attributions related to comprehensibility and significance that are held by violent crime survivors.

The aim of this research is to generate qualitative data on the meaning making processes, including both comprehensibility and significance, that South African crime survivors engage in, in relation to the event. These results may a) be of use to those investigating ways of intervening with crime victims and b) may be a small contribution to changing the current milieu of denial and silence surrounding the effects of crime in South Africa.

The thesis is divided into the following sections. Chapter two reviews the literature on crime victim research, trauma research, and post-trauma meaning-making. In Chapter three, the research aims and questions are outlined, the research design and sample are explained, the interview procedure and instrument described, and the method of data analysis, ethical considerations and reflexivity issues are discussed. In Chapter four, the results of the analysis are presented and discussed in relation to the literature. Finally, in Chapter five, a summary and discussion of the main findings is presented, factors limiting the research are discussed, and recommendations for future research and clinical practice are considered.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, definitions pertinent to the research are considered. Thereafter, high South African crime rates and their impact, and the lack of research on the effects of violent crime, are discussed. The problematic nature of trauma research is then outlined, in order to create awareness of the difficulties in trauma research and to explain the lack of research on the effects of violent crime on survivors. Following this, meaning making and posttraumatic growth (PTG) theories are located in the field of resilience, and meaning making theory, including assumption reconstruction, the stages of recovery and meaning making attributions, as well as types of benefit or PTG, are outlined. Finally, factors mitigating meaning making and PTG and the implication of the articulation of violent crime survivors' stories for larger society are examined.

2.1 Definitions

Before proceeding with a review of the literature, it is essential to define and clarify terms used in the literature that are pertinent to this research. These terms include trauma, violent crime, meaning making and posttraumatic growth (PTG).

2.1.1 Trauma

The DSM IV-TR's (APA, 2000) first criteria for defining a trauma involves having been exposed to a traumatic event in which an individual experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others. In addition, the person's response should have involved intense fear, helplessness or horror.

According to Herman (2001), traumatic events "overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life" and "generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death" (p. 33). In response, individuals commonly experience intense fear, helplessness, loss of control and fears of annihilation. This may result in normal "changes in arousal, attention, perception, and emotion" (Herman, 2001 p. 34). Traumatic reactions, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), occur when these ordinary responses continue after the event for a prolonged period and usually in an exaggerated form. From a cognitive perspective, trauma is "a set of circumstances that represent significant challenges to the adaptive

resources of the individual, and that represent significant challenges to the individual's ways of understanding the world and their place in it" (Janoff-Bulman, 1992 cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 1) These changes affect the individuals' "framework for interacting with the world at large" (Macfarlane & De Giroloma, 1996 p. 131).

2.1.2 Violent Crime

It appears evident that violent crime potentially falls under the classification of a traumatic event. However unlike some trauma such as natural disasters, violent crime additionally involves interpersonal violence. Fattah (1997) has suggested that criminal victimization can cause extreme emotional distress and as much trauma as a rape. According to Macfarlane and De Giroloma (1996), traumatic stressors can be divided into types. Violent crime is a time limited event where the victim is usually unprepared and the event is of high intensity (Macfarlane & De Giroloma, 1996). In the South African context, it is possible to postulate that crime experiences may be sequential stressors and have a cumulative effect. For the purpose of this study, violent crime is defined as a single incident that involved threatened or actual interpersonal assault with a weapon during the commission of the crime.

2.1.3 Meaning Making and Posttraumatic Growth (PTG)

The psychological literature indicates that there are a number of definitions of meaning making. For the purpose of this research, and as outlined in the introduction above, meaning making is understood as fulfilling two functions. On the first level, meaning making is concerned with making the trauma comprehensible. This is meaning in terms of the explanation one develops for the event (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1979; Davis, 2003; Janoff- Bulman, 1992; McIntosh, Silver & Wortman, 1993; Tait & Silver, 1989). On the second level, meaning making concerns issues of significance and is best understood as more than a return to baseline functioning. It includes the ability to develop new goals and purpose, or to reconstruct a sense of self that incorporates the significance of the negative experience (Edmonds & Hooker, 1992; Tides & Calhoun, 1995, cited in Davis 2003, p. 143). Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) term this Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) and view it "giving life value and purpose, making it worth an emotional commitment" (p. 71). PTG implies that the individual is capable of developing beyond their previous level of functioning and of

experiencing a significant beneficial change in cognitions and emotions (Linley, 2003; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, cited in Morris, Shakespeare-Finch, Reick & Newberry, 2005). Linley and Joseph (2004) explain that PTG is also termed stress-related growth, thriving, perceived benefits, positive adjustment, positive adaptation and adversarial growth in the literature.

2.2 Violent Crime and Violent Crime Research in South Africa

Currently there is concern amongst South Africans about the escalating crime rate. The Crime Information Analysis Centre (CIAC) of the South African Police Service (SAPS) reported the following statistics for the period between 2004 and 2005. There were 24, 516 attempted murders, 249,369 assaults with the intent to inflict bodily harm, 267,857 common assaults, 126,789 robberies with aggravating circumstances, 2,618 kidnappings, 3,880 abductions, 276,164 residential burglaries, 150,785 cases of malicious damage to property, 974 incidences of public violence, 12,434 carjacking, 58 bank robberies, 220 robberies of cash in transit, 15,497 cases of illegal possession of firearms and 84,001 drug related crimes.

Louw (1997) suggests that such official records usually do not reflect the actual extent of crime. Crime reporting is mediated by the seriousness of the crime. For instance, Block (1989) indicates that robberies are most likely to be reported when there has been injury and loss and thus petty theft is unlikely to be reported. Other factors influencing reporting include whether individuals have insurance and thus have a reason to report, access to police stations in order to report and police practice and staffing which either help or hinder the reporting process (Glanz, 1995 in Louw, 1997). In the South African context in particular, the police have historically been mistrusted, which probably impacts on crime reporting. In addition, currently there is a perception that the police and the justice system are ineffectual which undermines confidence in the reporting process (Louw, 1997). The actual crime rate is thus probably greater than the statistics reflect.

Louw (1997, p. 147) explains that perhaps one of “the most worrying features about the crime scene in South Africa is the propensity for violence”, with our murder and assault rates, for instance, being amongst the highest in the world. There have been a number of explanations for this. For instance, Louw (1997) suggests that apartheid

and political violence have resulted in a “culture of violence” (p. 151) and the breakdown of the family unit resulting in parents and communities having less control over children’s behaviour. In addition, the policing and justice system are ineffectual at the levels of crime detection, prosecution of offenders and incarceration, making it difficult for the system to control crime. Furthermore, periods of political transition and violence such as South Africa has gone through create a climate that increases the opportunity for organized crime to develop (Fajnzylber, Lederman & Loayza, 2002; Louw, 1997; Shaw, 2002).

MacMillan (2001) notes that violent crime is a “detrimental experience, both personally and socially” (p. 2). Waller (1989) notes that crime itself may result in economic loss (loss of property, income and medical costs) and inconvenience as victims wait for insurance claims, replace stolen goods and take part in medical or legal procedures (Waller, 1989). MacMillan (2001) argues that the educational and socioeconomic trajectories of individuals who experience violence pre-adulthood may be negatively impacted. MacMillan (2001) suggests that the experience of violence pre-adulthood can precipitate later involvement in crime and deviance. In South Africa, the fear of crime now outweighs concern about socio-economic issues (Louw, 1997). This results in a societal climate of fear and anger which may culminate in a desire for revenge (Waller, 1989). Combined with perceptions that the police and judicial system are ineffectual, militant vigilantism such as the development of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) may be encouraged (Louw, 1997). All of the above potentially impact on the economy and on society’s general well-being.

On an individual level, crime victims may incur physical injury ranging from bruises through to physical disability (Waller, 1989). Britt (2000) notes that violent crime victims report lower levels of perceived health and physical well-being. Crime victims and their families may also experience emotional trauma from violent crime. PTSD is one possible consequence for survivors of violent crime (Brewin, Andrews, Rose & Kirk, 1999). For instance, an early study of residential break-and-enter crime victims in Canada indicated that one in twenty qualified for a diagnosis of PTSD (Waller & Okihiro, 1982, cited in Waller, 1989). In another international study of fifty-five firearm assault survivors, it was found that 58% qualified for a diagnosis of PTSD (Burnetie, 1998). Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor (1995 in McMillan, 2001) found

victims of non-familial violence to have a higher risk of PTSD and more feelings of initial sadness. Kessler and Magee (1994 in Macmillan, 2001) found that non-familial physical assault pre-adulthood increased the rate of recurrent depression. Whereas the epidemiological literature indicates that 25% of people exposed to trauma develop PTSD, rates may be higher for victims of violence. Tedeschi (1999) suggests that one quarter to one third of victims exposed to interpersonal violence such as combat, crime and torture, go on to develop PTSD.

Cheeseboro (2004) notes that, historically, the focus of crime research internationally has been on the offender. International research on the emotional effects experienced by victims of violent crime is limited (Harrison & Kinner, 1998; cited in MacMillan, 2001) and has been focused predominantly on rape survivors (Cobb, Tedeschi, Calhoun & Cann, 2006, Waller, 1989) and survivors of political violence (Hobfoll, Tracy & Galea, 2006; Tedeschi, 1999). South African research into the psychological effects of violent crime on survivors is very limited (Louw, 1997). A lack of research on the psychological impact of violent crime is also evident in the literature on meaning making and PTG. A recent quantitative study by Cobb, Tedeschi, Calhoun and Cann (2006) examined and found that most women experienced PTG after surviving intimate partner violence. Tedeschi (1999) has applied the literature on meaning making and PTG theory to victims of violence. Few articles encompass the concept of PTG or meaning making in studies of violent crime victims in the South African context. Peltzer (2000) carried out a study that focused on posttraumatic symptoms following a violent crime in a community sample in South Africa. Although a measure of PTG was included in the study, the findings discussed were focused mainly on measures of negative posttraumatic symptoms.

The lack of research on crime victims may translate into a lack of actual interventions for victims of crime (Hembree & Foa, 2003). As Waller (1989, p. 253) notes, “crime victims are left orphans by the lack of support from health and social services”. The Wits Trauma Clinic attached to the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation is one of the few organizations that provide a service to victims of violent criminal, political, sexual and institutional crime (Eagle, 1998). The integrated five strategy model, based on trauma theory includes retelling the story, normalizing symptoms, addressing self-blame, developing mastery and where appropriate,

facilitating meaning making (Eagle, 2000). Eagle (1998) notes the importance of understanding “the systems of meaning within which victims experiences are embedded...For psychotherapy to be successful there is a need to understand the worldview of the client well enough to orientate input” (p. 273). Thus, as Gottfredson, Tsegaye-Spates and Reiser (1987) state, there is clearly a need to develop theory to inform intervention and research into the meaning making experiences of crime victims in South Africa. Such research is particularly relevant as positive adjustment and transformation on an individual level can possibly lead to social transformation, which is of particular interest in a high crime society such as South Africa (Tedeschi, 1999). The reason for a lack of research on victims of crime, as well as methodological difficulties associated with trauma research, become apparent through an examination of the history of trauma research.

2.3 Historical Considerations in Trauma Research

2.3.1 The History of Trauma Research

There has always been an intimate connection between the way people have approached the study of trauma and the cultural, social, historical, and political needs and conditions of the time (Herman, 2001; Van der Kolk, Weisaeth & Van der Hart, 1996; Young, 1995)

The first studies examining trauma centred on traumatic neurosis following accidents that were subject to compensation claims (Macfarlane & Giroloma, 1996). Page’s (1885) theory postulating that “railroad spine” had psychological instead of organic origins was adopted in compensation cases. Explanations in terms of psychological origins allowed refusal of compensation to these victims (Van der Kolk, Weisaeth & Van der Hart, 1996).

In psychiatry, Freud (1896a in Van der Kolk et al., 1996) originally held that dissociated childhood sexual abuse caused hysteria. Perhaps due to society’s difficulty accepting the widespread occurrence of the seemingly evident sexual abuse, Freud began to suggest that repressed instinctual wishes formed the basis of hysteria. Quickly the view arose that this trauma was the product of children’s sexual fantasies and hysterical patients were seen as highly suggestible (Van der Kolk et al., 1996).

During WWI, shellshock was viewed either as organic changes in the central nervous system due to the firing of arms or as a failure of willpower. Treatment was so painful that many soldiers chose to return to the front and were considered cured (Macfarlane & Giroloma, 1996; Van der Kolk et al., 1996). In the period after WWI, Bonhoeffer (1926) suggested that traumatic neurosis was caused by the secondary gain of compensation and the National Health insurance act of 1926 in Germany stopped compensation to these individuals (Macfarlane & Giroloma, 1996; Van der Kolk et al., 1996).

World War I presented challenges to Freud's theory of trauma. However, he developed two theories of war trauma (Van der Kolk et al., 1996). One focused on the patient's fixation on the traumatic incident and the other on the mobilization of defences in response to an "unacceptable impulse" (Van der Kolk et al., 1996 p.54-55). These models resulted in minimal research into the effects of real trauma on people's lives for 20 years after the war. The DSM-I (1952) conceptualized trauma in terms of acute symptoms following an extreme trauma. Perhaps in an effort to negate the long-term effects of war, prolonged trauma-related disorders were conceptualized separately as anxiety or depressive neurosis (Macfarlane & De Giroloma, 1996). Through the above history, trauma victims and their distress were repeatedly discredited.

The impetus for an integrated understanding of trauma in terms of social, psychological and biological functions came from the exposure of young mental health professionals to the trauma of WWII. The development of social psychiatry in the 1960's and 1970's, the studies of survivors of the concentration camps of WWII and studies of women and children strengthened new conceptualizations (Macfarlane & De Giroloma, 1996). In DSM-III (1987) therefore, all the different syndromes assigned to victims of various traumas were subsumed under one category, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and specific symptom reactions to trauma were included (Harris & Kinner, 1998; Van der Kolk et al., 1996).

The above history of trauma research indicates that there is a history of minimizing the experience of trauma victims. Likewise the relative exclusion of research on trauma populations such as violent crime survivors in South Africa seems to hint at a

culture of denial of the gravity of crime and its impact on our society. This history of trauma research in context also makes it clear that it is extremely important to examine the approach employed to research, to ensure the experience of a trauma population is properly articulated. The problematic nature of the traditional quantitative symptom inventory approach in trauma research is discussed in the methodology section. Next the position of meaning making and PTG theory will be located within the broad field of trauma research.

2.3.2 Meaning Making and PTG as Resilience Factors

Research began to show fairly early on that PTSD was not as widespread amongst for instance, the survivors of war as expected. Researchers such as Antonovsky (1987, cited in Almedon, 2005) began to investigate concepts such as salutogenesis (origins of health), and other researchers became interested in factors affecting posttraumatic stress adjustment (Almedon, 2005). Traditionally, posttraumatic stress adjustment has been accounted for in terms of vulnerability and resilience (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996).

In the 1970's, research in trauma focused on developing reliable and valid rating scales to assess for vulnerabilities thought to play a key role in development and long – term adjustment of PTSD (Van der Kolk et al., 1996). Research that focuses on vulnerability examines factors that “are generally neither necessary nor sufficient to explain the onset of a disorder or predict its course, but rather place the individual at risk of a negative outcome” (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996, p.157). Researchers have focused on pre-existing individual personality differences or key traits that may predict how a person responds to trauma. Such vulnerability factors include a past or family history of psychiatric illness, neuroticism and other personality traits, lack of social mediators and prior or subsequent traumas (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996). In the diathesis-stress model approach, vulnerability factors such as a “ruminative coping style” (Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson & Grayson 1999, cited in Davis 2003, p. 138) or a pessimistic “attributional style” (Peterson & Seligman, 1984, cited in Davis 2003, p. 138), combined with a stressful event, may result in PTSD. Conversely, traits such as optimism and mastery are seen to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes (Carver, 1998, cited in Davis, 2003).

Research into resilience factors first began during WWII (Macfarlane & De Giroloma, 1996) but has subsequently been under-theorized (Bonnano, 2004). When studying resilience factors, researchers look at factors that, “may minimize the intensity of the individual’s acute distress or allow the more rapid modulation of an abnormal reaction” (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996, p. 158). The role of meaning as a factor in post trauma recovery was first identified by theorists such as Janoff-Bulman (1992) in the 1980’s. This notion has received credence over time by a number of researchers. Recently, for instance, Fontana & Rosenheck (2005) found that the distress among Vietnam War veterans caused by a lack of meaning was the main motivating factor in them seeking help from clergy or mental health practitioners. The process of meaning making was even more strongly researched in the 1990’s (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Since 1990, the possibility of not only returning to baseline functioning through meaning making, but of achieving posttraumatic growth following trauma, has been theorized.

Research has been conducted on meaning making and PTG in a variety of populations, including survivors of natural disasters (Erikson, 1978), traumatic bereavement (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1989- 1990; Cleiren, 1993; Edmonds & Hooker, 1992; Hogan, Morse & Tason, 1996; Lehman et al. 1993; McIntosh, Silver & Wortman, 1993; Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 1999; Parkes & Weiss, 1983), cancer (Cardova, Cunningham, Carlson & Andrykowski, 2001; Taylor, Lichtman & Wood, 1984), severe burns (Kiecolt-Glaser & Williams, 1987), stroke (Thompson, 1991), rape (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1979; Foa & Rothbaum, 1998), spinal cord injury (Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Silver, 1982), war (Fontana & Rosenheck, 2005); students experiencing negative events (Park, Cohen & Murch, 1996), transportation accidents (Joseph, Williams & Yule, 1993), house fires (Thompson, 1985), being taken hostage (Sank, 1979), patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis (Tennen, Affleck, Urrows, Higgins & Mendola, 1992), HIV infection (Bower, Kemeny, Taylor & Fahey, 1998), bone marrow transplants (Andrykowski, Brady & Hunt) and heart attacks (Affleck, Tennen, Croog & Levine, 1987), and parents coping with medical problems of children (Abbott & Meredith, 1986). There are virtually no studies on the victims of violent crime and the meanings and growth generated from such experiences, although Tedeschi (1999) suggests that the process of meaning making

and PTG seem to be similar in a variety of traumas. Below the literature on meaning-making and posttraumatic growth is reviewed.

2.4 Meaning Making Theory

2.4.1 Assumption Reconstruction and Posttraumatic Adjustment

Meaning making theories are based on the notion that experiences of trauma shatter the basic beliefs that individuals have about the world (Foa & Rothbaum, 1998; Janoff-Bulman, 1992, 2004). Janoff-Bulman (1992) termed these beliefs about the world assumptions. It was proposed that adjustment of survivors rests largely on whether shattered assumptions about the world and self following a trauma can be rebuilt into new hopeful assumptions in order to minimize disillusionment. Attig (2003) describes assumptions as beliefs individuals have that are not always readily accessible and are not always primarily cognitive. “Instead it is best to think of them as deeply embedded and obscured in habitual life and operative automatically in all dimensions of our being, not merely in belief or cognition” (Attig, 2003, p. 41). Trauma shatters such assumptions and therefore profoundly alters the frame of reference the survivor has for interacting with the world. Building new assumptions occurs in multiple ways. The intellect may be used to seek answers and meanings and the individual may deliberately examine and experiment with alternatives. However, the persistent affective pain following the trauma motivates changes in “habits, motivations, dispositions, ways of doing things...patterns of our activities and experiences”, so old assumptions are abandoned and new assumptions are built up (Attig, 2003, p. 41).

Over a 15 year period of studying the psychological responses of victims, Janoff-Bulman (1992) developed The World Assumption Scale. It was proposed that there are three core assumptions that can be shattered by traumatic events. Core assumptions are also termed higher order schemas in the literature (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Janoff-Bulman's (1992) assumptions include the benevolence of the world, the meaningfulness of the world and self-worth. Benevolence of the world is the extent to which victims see the world as a basically safe and good place with good people (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). The benevolence of others is evident in schema involving interpersonal trust, safety, and intimacy (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

Meaningfulness is the individual's perception that the world is inherently just and ordered. There is thus a perception that there is orderliness, predictability and thus controllability to the events in the world as opposed to a chaotic randomness (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Finally, self worth includes positive or negative views of the self and personal behaviour (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Self-worth also involves personal perceptions of power (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Janoff-Bulman (1992) postulated that although all three assumptions could be questioned after a trauma, over time the assumptions appear to exist independently. This indicates that assumptions may be rebuilt at different rates. McCann and Pearlman (1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998) similarly theorized that the shattered assumptions that are challenged by experiences of trauma centre on the needs for meaningfulness, safety, dependence and trust of self and others, power, esteem, intimacy and independence.

Some theorists believe that failure to make meaning or rebuild assumptions after a trauma is what causes Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) explain that distressing emotions such as anxiety, sadness, guilt, anger, irritability or depression may follow a traumatic event. In addition, distressing patterns of thinking may occur, such as disbelief and psychological numbness and/or repetitive intrusive thoughts and images. In addition, physical symptoms such as fatigue, muscle tension and gastric symptoms may occur. Sewell and Williams (2003) use a constructivist model of posttraumatic stress and propose that "constructive bankruptcy" (p. 294) or the inability to make meaning at all after a trauma, results in re-experiencing phenomena and emotional distress as the unprocessed trauma remains in mind. Neimeyer (2004) terms this the disorganized narrative. Should the individual experience "dissociated construction" (Sewell & Williams, 2003, p. 294), where meaning making is unsophisticated and not well integrated into the conceptual system, the person's well-being is unstable and depressive symptoms may follow. In addition, constructive bankruptcy and dissociative construction may alternate and account for volatile mood swings (Sewell & Williams, 2003).

However, increasingly it has been found that the ability to engage in meaning making and experience PTG does not necessarily mean the absence of pain and suffering (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Morris et al., 2005; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). A recent

study by Hobfoll, Tracy and Galea (2006) examined the effect of resource loss after the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, as a predictor of PTSD and depression. It was found that meaning making and PTG did not have a protective effect on risk for PTSD and depression. Morris et al.'s (2005) research assessing the nature of PTG amongst the Australian population showed that the positive and negative symptoms of trauma often co-exist. A number of theorists agree that following trauma there can be negative symptoms, positive symptoms and usually a combination of both types of symptoms (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2004; Joseph & Linley, 2005; Linley & Joseph, 2004). There currently seem to be a number of explanations for this.

Lechner and Antoni (2004) caution against a western cultural belief that values positive thinking, which may cause people to defensively report posttraumatic growth when they are in fact not experiencing any. Maercker and Zoellner (2004) and Zoellner and Maercker (2006) propose that there may be a constructive, self-transcending side to PTG but postulate that there also may be a "self-deceptive illusory side" (Maercker & Zoellner, 2004, p. 43). It is suggested that, when faced with threatening information after a trauma, individuals may respond with positive but slightly distorted beliefs about themselves and the future. This may be a form of initial coping, and as real posttraumatic growth occurs the illusory part diminishes (Maercker & Zoellner, 2004; Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 2004; Parks, 2004; Stanton & Low, 2004; Wortman, 2004; Zoellner & Maercker, 2006). Nolen-Hoeksema and Davis (2004) term this an "active coping effort" (p. 60). However, if this type of reported growth is also associated with cognitive avoidant strategies, such as wishful thinking or trying not to think about the event, then the illusion of benefits may in fact be part of the denial process (Maercker & Zoellner, 2004; Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 2004; Parks, 2004; Stanton & Low, 2004; Wortman, 2004; Zoellner & Maercker, 2006). It is suggested that, by assessing for tendencies to avoid the negative impact of the trauma cognitively or by examining a tendency for illusory thinking generally, illusory growth may be identified (Zoellner & Maercker, 2006). Thus illusory growth could possibly explain mixed positive and negative symptomology in survivors of trauma.

A second explanation for mixed symptomology comes from Park and Helgeson (2006) and Helgeson, Kerry and Tomich (2006), who conducted meta-analyses of articles published in the last six years that propose PTG is related to psychological health. Both meta-analyses found that victims reporting PTG continued to experience intrusive thoughts. Both studies propose that intrusive thought is a marker of cognitive processing resulting in ongoing meaning making and PTG (Helgeson, Kerry & Tomich, 2006; Park & Helgeson, 2006). Thus, as postulated by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), it seems that the ongoing process of meaning making after a trauma may be facilitated in part by negative emotional and cognitive reminders of the event in intrusive thoughts (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). In both meta-analyses, perceived growth was related to less depression and more positive affect, which were experienced as increased well being. What appears to be central at this stage of mixed research findings is that some negative symptoms, such as intrusive thoughts, motivate and are part of the meaning making process, and positive symptoms such as more positive affect and less depression are a result of the meaning making process and facilitate posttraumatic adjustment.

Based on the notion that assumptions are shattered following trauma, Janoff-Bulman (1992) proposed an early model of response to trauma and the recovery process which focused primarily on meaning making as a coping process, a way of returning to previous functioning. However other meaning making researchers, such as Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) and Davis (2003), and wisdom theorists such as Linley (2003), have extended the concept of meaning making as a coping mechanism to meaning making as a process enabling posttraumatic growth as well. They have also enriched trauma theory by identifying the stages and strategies of the meaning making process.

2.4.2 The Stages of Recovery and Meaning Making

2.4.2.1 Stage one: manageability.

Most theorists recognize an initial acute stage of response to trauma in which containment rather than meaning making is the central task. Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) term this stage manageability. Similarly, Linley (2003) proposes that the focus initially is on the recognition and management of uncertainty. There is considerable overlap in terms of the cognitive strategies used at this stage and in the subsequent

meaning making stage that aims at developing an explanatory and comprehensible account of the event.

Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) explain that immediately after a trauma a person may feel that it is possible for things to return to the way they were before the crisis. Attempts are made to reverse the situation and to hold onto old assumptions. These are attempts at primary control and are inevitable and necessary. When belief in primary control proves too painful, victims try to adjust to the uncontrollable events through secondary control. Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004) explain that secondary control involves giving up certain goals and assumptions while persisting in building new schemas, meanings and goals. Tedeschi (1999) explains that this disengagement from old goals may be a struggle, as what is being given up has been fundamentally important to the individual up until that point. Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) see this as a process of acceptance rather than denial and Linley (2003) terms it openness to change. In order to disengage, initial distressing affect needs to be managed.

Linley (2003) proposes that affect is managed by recognizing and managing the uncertainty following the loss of assumptions. Reducing emotional distress, including anxiety and depression, can be done through coping mechanisms such as venting of emotions or seeking social support (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Sewell and Williams (2003) propose that in therapy manageability would be enhanced by cognitive behavioural techniques such as relaxation, thought stopping and self-talk. Managing affect allows cognitive processing (rumination) to begin, which allows progression to the next stages of comprehensibility and meaningfulness.

Rumination is an ongoing cognitive mechanism that begins with trying to make the trauma manageable, and later allows the tasks of comprehension and meaningfulness to be achieved (Silver, Boon & Stones, 1983; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Initially rumination may be automatic (Tedeschi, 1999). At later stages rumination becomes more purposeful and consists of reviewing the traumatic event, searching for meaning in it and trouble-shooting new assumptions and related goals and plans (Martin & Tesser, 1989, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Tait & Silver, 1989).

At the manageability stage, rumination escalates to the degree that stress and negative emotion increase, but alternates with denial so that the victim is able to assimilate small doses of information. Rumination increases when initial strategies (primary controls) of holding onto old assumptions and problem solving fail. When the individual is able to disengage from old schemas and substitute more attainable goals so that higher-order goals may still be achieved, rumination begins to subside. This allows progression to the comprehensibility stage, where rumination decreases further with the finding of meaning in the trauma (Tedeschi, 1999; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The process of rumination to make the trauma comprehensible may proceed quickly or take years. Miller and C'deBaca (1994, cited in Tedeschi, 1999) state that where individuals had little initial control over their lives and had reached an emotionally low point prior to the trauma, rumination and meaning making could be a quick process. In contrast, rape survivors display delayed recovery, having avoided the deliberate rumination process for years (Burt & Katz, 1987, cited in Tedeschi, 1999). Rumination may continue for years as survivors attempt to find benefit or significance in the trauma (Tedeschi, 1999).

There has been some criticism of the rumination concept by researchers who ascertain that increased rumination is in fact associated with escalated negative affect. Researchers such as Tedeschi and Calhoun (2005) and Nolen-Hoeksema and Davis (2004) distinguish adaptive rumination from depressogenic rumination. The type of rumination required for adaptation to trauma is “(a) conscious; (b) revolves around an instrumental theme; and (c) occurs without direct cuing from the environment, but is easily and indirectly cued because it is connected with important goals, leading to recurrent thoughts” (Martin & Tesser, 1996, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 9). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2000, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 11) found in particular that non-intrusive repetitive thinking directly after the event, deliberate meaning making soon after the event and “positive reinterpretation and benefit reminding” were related to the ability to find meaning and to PTG.

2.4.2.2 Stage two: comprehensibility.

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) and Janoff-Bulman (2004) propose that the second stage of response to trauma, comprehensibility, is essentially the first meaning-making stage of the recovery process. One of the main tasks of the second stage is the

integration of affect, cognition and disrupted memory, so that the world again begins to make sense (Linley, 2003). Rumination continues but starts to lead to schema revision. The victim attempts to create an explanatory account for the event and emotional distress usually decreases. This level of meaning making results in what is termed the initial growth stage and benefits such as a sense of personal strength, recognition of the value of social support and some personality change may occur.

In the trauma literature, schemas or core assumptions are “organized cognitive structures that serve as theories on which to base our processing of information – including attention, memory, meaning, planning, and ultimately, action” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, p. 67-68). Schemas are ordered hierarchically. Higher order schemas involve the assumptions about benevolence of the world and people, the predictability and controllability of events and self-worth, postulated by Janoff-Bulman (1992). Trauma challenges these higher order schemas, making life difficult to comprehend. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) note that it is not only cognitive schemas but affective schemas that are activated and integrated. The affective component is essential in rebuilding schemas so that the lessons learned are not just intellectual reflections (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Linley (2003) also notes that integration of affect with cognition is essential as defending against difficult affect does not allow further cognitive processing.

Finding meaning is made possible when events can be incorporated into existing higher order schemas. Alternatively, traumatic events can promote the development of new higher order schemas (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Linley and Joseph (2005) explain that this occurs through the cognitive processes of assimilation, negative accommodation and positive accommodation. In assimilation, existing schemas are able to incorporate the information generated by the trauma. In accommodation, existing schemas do not allow trauma information to be assimilated so the schemas themselves must change (Linley & Joseph, 2005). New schemas are the result of contradictory notions that are held or known in a fragmented schematic system. The trauma activates less used fragments which may then form part of a new dominant schema (Kelly, 1955, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Accommodation may be positive, resulting in new adaptive world views. On the other hand, negative accommodation would lead to “negative changes in worldview and resultant

psychopathology” (Linley & Joseph, 2005 p. 269). Comprehensibility, or return to previous baseline, makes use of strategies of assimilation and positive accommodation. Finding significance or PTG requires positive accommodation, as growth requires new worldviews (Linley & Joseph, 2005).

Janoff-Bulman (1992) proposed that the reworking of schemas could be aided by interpretation and redefinition. Cognitive strategies such as downward comparisons and self-blame function to “minimize the differences between prior positive assumptions and negative assumptions implied by the negative event” (p. 117). They can thus potentially aid assimilation and accommodation. Trauma survivors may engage in downward social comparisons with real or hypothetical others who have experienced a trauma but who are not coping as well as they are (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). It is common for survivors to compare themselves with a particular dimension of a person rather than the whole person. Comparisons may take the form of an evaluation that the victim’s situation or outcome could have been worse or that the victim is in fact coping well in comparison to other victims (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Downward comparisons serve to increase self esteem and reduce the belief that the victim is alone in a particular situation (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

It has been suggested that self-blame can be an important part of manageability and comprehensibility (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Janoff-Bulman (1992) distinguishes between two types of self-blame. Characterological self-blame focuses on the survivor’s character and qualities. For instance, a person may believe they are inherently bad and thus deserve what has happened to them. This type of self-blame can hinder the rebuilding of shattered assumptions. Behavioural self-blame focuses on what behaviour could have contributed to or prevented the trauma. This may actually be a way of minimizing the threatening, meaningless nature of the trauma and making the trauma controllable (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Behavioural self-blame opens the possibility of new behaviours, which may not actually reduce risk significantly but are a source of comfort. Behavioural self-blame is a more beneficial strategy to adopt in specific trauma conditions than in others. For instance, Morton Bard and Dawn Sangrey (1980, cited in Janoff-Bulman, 1992) who have studied crime victims internationally, note that crime victims are eager to attribute causality to leaving a window open etc. However, where individuals have already taken behavioural

precautions, self-blame is linked with higher levels of emotional distress (Davis, 2003; Davis et al. 1995; Tait & Silver, 1989). Frazier (2000) explains that victims of interpersonal violence, such as rape, commonly engage in blaming chance for their involvement in the violation. Finally, victims of rape often assign blame to the perpetrator (Frazier, 2000). Tedeschi (1999) explains that where perpetrator blame in victims of violence results in anger which is acted upon, it can be detrimental to the survivor.

Religious schemas can also be applied to make traumatic events comprehensible. This can be done in a passive way, believing that the event is part of God's will, or in an active way which increases one's devotion or religious activity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). When using a self directing style, God plays a relatively minor role and in the collaborative style there is an active exchange with God. Thus these two styles may help people manage anxiety while encouraging exploration of more effective skills. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) note, however, that a deferring religious style, which tends to stress external support from God, may be an obstacle to opportunities for future learning. Religion also offers certain activities and spaces that can provide meaning to what is otherwise incomprehensible. It also offers social support, and an outlet for emotional expression (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Thus religion provides "interpretive control" (Rothbaum et al., 1982, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995 p. 74). Religion thus seems to provide a means of coping with emotional distress and can give meaning to the trauma

2.4.2.3 Stage three: identifying significance/benefit or PTG.

Janoff-Bulman's (1992) final stage in the meaning making process is termed "meaning-making" (p. 118) and requires that the victim re-evaluate the traumatic event in terms of benefits, purpose and significance (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, 2004). Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) conceptualize meaning making in this third stage to result in PTG. Meaning generated at this stage serves to give "life value and purpose, making it worth an emotional commitment" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, p. 71) Baltes and Smith (1990, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995) describe the meaning and knowledge's generated at this level as "knowledge that allows people to succeed in the fundamental life tasks of life planning, life review, and life management" (p. 86).

According to Linley (2003) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995), this requires the ability to tolerate paradox and integrate the trauma into a coherent life narrative. Cognitive processes centre on dialectical thinking and revision of the life narrative.

Both Linley (2003) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (2003) note that through dialectical integration the individual develops the ability to hold opposites in mind simultaneously with the knowledge that they are part of a larger concept. This allows an appreciation of paradox (Linley, 2003). Sewell and Williams (2003) use a constructionist approach to explain this very well. They explain that people have explicit expectations that guide how they understand experiences. A trauma violates these explicit expectations. Immediately after the trauma, the traumatic subsystem is often completely incongruent with the self of the past and the previously expected future. In order to make a trauma comprehensible, it is necessary to bring the exact opposite, less elaborated, implicit expectation to conscious awareness. For example, prior to a trauma, victims may have thought that they were safe and now they must bring forth the construct that they are unsafe. However, these old and new constructs must be integrated into the whole system of meaning in the life narrative (Sewell & Williams, 2003).

Thus the second strategy for attaining meaningfulness is for the trauma to be integrated into the life narrative (Harvey, Barnett & Overstreet, 2004; Linley, 2003; Neimeyer, 2004; Sewell & Williams, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Tuval-Mashiach, Freedman, Bargai, Boker Hadar and Shalev (2004) explain that through this integration the life narrative becomes more coherent. In order for integration and coherence to occur, past metaconstructions need to be made conscious (Sewell & Williams, 2003). Pals and Mc Adams (2004) note that, in order to successfully reconstruct the life narrative following trauma, individuals must firstly acknowledge and deeply examine the shattering of their understandings following the event. The trauma related metaconstructions must then be evoked and fragments of memory and understanding pieced together. Past and trauma metaconstructions which usually consist of opposing material need to be bridged with new metaconstructions (Sewell & Williams, 2003). Integrating the trauma into the life story often involves viewing the trauma as a turning point that gives meaning and a plan to the rest of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Constructing a positive ending to the narrative brings

both coherence and resolution (Pals & Mc Adams, 2004). Based on this new metaconstruction, new intentional future metaconstructions for the future can be created (Sewell & Williams, 2003). In the following section, the types of meaning or benefits reported by trauma survivors are reviewed.

2.4.3 Types of Benefits/Significance and PTG

Janoff-Bulman (1992) postulates that there are two main types of interpretation of traumatic events: benefits to the self in terms of lessons learned and benefits to others. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) and Davis (2003) found trauma could be interpreted in terms of changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships and philosophy of life. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2003) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) refined these concepts further and developed the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory. It is a five factor inventory consisting of a personal strength factor (self-perception) and a relating to others factor (interpersonal relationships), and the previous philosophy of life factor subdivided into three additional factors: appreciation of life, new possibilities and spiritual change.

2.4.3.1 Personal strength.

Personal strength is paradoxical, consisting of increased self reliance and a simultaneous sense of vulnerability (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1999). Living through a trauma often affords individuals an increased sense of self-reliance when they are able to cope with the trauma in an assertive and successful way. Having coped with something extremely traumatic or the aftermath of a trauma often gives people the sense that they will be able to cope with other events more easily. The sense of having coped thus becomes generalized. Simultaneously, trauma may make people more aware of their vulnerability, which motivates them to change dangerous or unhealthy ways of living. The simultaneous development of self-reliance and vulnerability does occur and is reflected in the adapted use of social support networks (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

2.4.3.2 Interpersonal relationships.

Interpersonal relationships, particularly with family members, may improve after a traumatic experience. For instance, the need to talk through the experience may lead to increased self-disclosure. The recognition of one's vulnerability may make men, in

particular, become more expressive emotionally and more open to accepting help and social support. Having experienced extreme suffering, survivors are often more compassionate, empathic, have an increased sense of closeness with others and put more effort into relationships (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi, 1999; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

2.4.3.3 Changed philosophy of life.

Many survivors experience a changed philosophy of life after a trauma (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Appreciation of life includes appreciation of the individual's own life and of each day, resulting in a reordering of priorities. Individuals may interpret their experience as having given them new possibilities and this may lead to the establishment of new interests, a new life path and a tendency to change things that were not working (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 2004).

2.4.3.4 Spirituality.

A number of researchers give a place to a spiritual or religious component not only in developing comprehensibility but in the PTG process (Attig 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) explain that even non-religious individuals may engage in existential issues, which can be viewed as growth in the spiritual domain. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) and Tedeschi (1999) point out that a strengthening of spiritual beliefs may help survivors gain a sense of control over life, belief in a bigger power may bring comfort, and a relationship with a god may give victims a sense of intimacy which offsets loneliness. It is proposed that "meaning can be found in religious concepts about life and suffering" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, p. 39). This type of meaning may encourage the development of a new life philosophy. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) suggest that religion may be able to provide higher schemas that preserve meaning even in the face of traumatic events. Religious higher order schemas are adaptive when they lead to positive affect and encourage the individual to explore new behaviours and personal limits. It is important that these religious schemas are flexible and well developed in order to assimilate future traumatic events. Religious schemas may give meaning to a particular traumatic event, or allow life to continue to be meaningful despite the traumatic event.

2.4.3.5 Wisdom.

Linley (2003) and Tedeschi (1999) propose that the greatest benefit from trauma is the acquisition of wisdom. Wisdom is defined as “a person’s expertise in the fundamental pragmatics of life. That is high level abilities of knowledge and judgement about the essence of the human condition, and the ways and means of planning for, managing, and understanding how people may best lead their lives, within the context of whatever values they may hold to be important” (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, cited in Linley, 2003, p. 602). Linley (2003) thus explains that understandings and interpretations of traumatic events may result in:

- (1) rich factual knowledge about the fundamental pragmatics of life;
- (2) rich procedural knowledge about the fundamental pragmatics of life;
- (3) life span contextualism, that is knowledge about the many themes and contexts of life, including for example education, family and work;
- (4) the recognition and tolerance of differences in beliefs and values; and
- (5) the recognition and management of uncertainty (pp. 602-603).

This type of wisdom may be attained by young people as well as old people following a trauma (Tedeschi, 1999). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) postulate that PTG and the acquisition of life wisdom are an outcome of trauma but in some instances may be an ongoing process.

2.4.3.6 Other gains.

Other researchers have postulated other possible gains following trauma. McMillan and Fisher (1998, cited in Parks, 2004) suggest lifestyle changes, material gain, self-efficacy, family closeness, community closeness, faith in people and compassion may be reported. Armeli, Gunthert and Cohen (2001, cited in Parks, 2004) cited affect regulation, treatment of others, self-understanding, belongingness and optimism as possible PTG factors. McFarland and Alvaro (2000, cited in Parks, 2004) mention that PTG may encompass positive social orientation, self-insight and appreciativeness, honesty and reliability, and opportunities in life.

2.4.3.7 Important considerations of PTG.

Calhoun and Tedeschi (2003) draw attention to a number of cautions regarding the gains of the significance stage of meaning making, or Post Traumatic Growth (PTG).

Growth manifests in different ways and may be experienced in some but not all areas of life. The concept of PTG must not be used to minimize the negative and painful impact of trauma (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Lechner & Antoni, 2004; Standton & Low, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). It is argued that the significance, benefit, meaning making, or PTG, should not necessarily be the aim of therapeutic work (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Lechner & Antoni, 2004; Standton & Low, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Rather, it may possibly emerge as one aspect of the recovery process. The primary task of the clinician is to help the individual work through a shattered worldview and rebuild a narrative that incorporates the trauma. Next a number of factors that may mitigate meaning making and PTG in survivors of violent crime are discussed.

2.4.4 Factors Mitigating Meaning Making and PTG

The literature reveals that a number of factors affect the meaning making process. There is some evidence that prior stressors may inoculate against later trauma (Aldwin & Levenson, 2004; Janoff-Bulman, 2004; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Tedeschi, 1999). These stressors, however, are usually moderate events that slowly challenge and change naïve assumptions. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) add that vicarious experiences can be protective against trauma, if what is viewed presents a manageable challenge to the cognitive schema (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). An example would be viewing a documentary on the experiences of survivors of violent crime in South Africa, which also presents a plan for responding to such events. Naïve notions that the individual won't be affected by crime are challenged, however the information is manageable as the crime is not being experienced directly and the individual is equipped with resources to deal with a criminal victimization in the future. However, prior events are only strengthening if the individual has managed to "re-establish a stable, non-threatening, integrated inner world" (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, p. 90). Failure to do this makes the prior event a predisposing vulnerability (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Below are a number of vulnerability factors that may mitigate posttraumatic meaning making and growth.

2.4.4.1 Trauma type.

Different types of events are likely to produce different types of growth. Depending on whether events are seen to have been the result of the self, the actions of others or

chance, growth will occur in different areas. However, all events have the potential for growth depending on the response to them (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Variations in stressors present unique challenges to the assumptive world (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Janoff-Bulman (1992) explains that survivors of interpersonal victimization often hold the most negative assumptions about themselves and the world. For instance, crime victims tend to have a negative view of other people and may believe that some people can't be trusted. Victims of childhood abuse may experience a profound sense of powerlessness and helplessness at the hands of another. Herman (2001) and Janoff-Bulman (1992) point out the difficulty of overcoming interpersonal violence. Studies indicate that the highest rates of PTSD occur in survivors of interpersonal violence (Breslau, 1998; Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes & Nelson, 1995). Janoff-Bulman (1992) also suggests that those surviving natural disasters tend to question the meaning and rules governing the universe. The world is seen as less controllable. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2003) and Morris, Shakespeare-Finch, Reick and Newbery (2005) indicate that the more severe the trauma is and the more fundamental the assumptions that are shattered, the greater the degree of possible change in schemas and thus PTG. It must also be noted that subjective appraisal of the severity of violence in a trauma changes the extent to which the event is experienced as traumatic or not (Tedeschi, 1999). However, there does seem to be a limit to this correlation and after a certain degree of trauma no additional growth takes place (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

2.4.4.2 Age.

Theory suggests that meaning making and PTG are affected by age. Childhood trauma differs from adult trauma in that the child's inner world is more flexible and able to accommodate new input (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). On the protective side, children are more sensitive to the interpretations of adults of traumatic events. Close adults can therefore reframe an event so that it poses less threat to the internal world. Children are also more able to use an empathic response from caregivers to build up a positive assumptive world quite quickly despite severe trauma. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) indicate the need for more research into the particulars of meaning making of children and are currently developing a measure of posttraumatic growth for children. Conversely older people may derive less benefit from the meaning making process as

they may be less open to learning and change, being established in their ways (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

However, study results are mixed on the age factor (Lechner et al., 2002 cited in Parks, 2004; Linley & Joseph, 2004; McMillan, Zuravin & Rideout, 1995, cited in Parks, 2004). When parents or trusted others, who are supposed to provide a trusting and caring environment, are perpetrators of traumatic experience such as incest, the child's core sense of self and others is powerfully affected. The child's world is then largely one of anxiety, threat and distrust. Such children may show cognitive delays and have delayed problem solving ability, poor cognitive flexibility and ability to accommodate to new situations, less verbal ability and poor cognitive organization (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Survivors of childhood trauma are likely to overreact to new stressors with extreme hyperarousal and cognitive emotional disintegration. They may lack the cognitive and emotional abilities that facilitate recovery (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Tedeschi (1999) explains that when children are exposed to violence early, within a chaotic society, the prognosis is particularly poor. This seems relevant to particular sectors of society in South Africa where apartheid created such situations. Silver, Boon and Stones (1983) suggest that with such individuals it may be better to learn techniques such as thought stopping in order to facilitate living with the event than to enter a process of exploration of the event.

2.4.4.3 Attachment patterns.

It is not only childhood trauma that may mediate PTG, but different styles of attachment patterns from childhood (Salo, Qouta & Punamaki, 2005). Attachment patterns influence early schemas about self-worth, benevolence of others and safety in the world. A study by Salo, Qouta and Punamaki (2005) investigated this hypothesis amongst torture survivors and found that PTG was possible even after torture if victims had secure attachment styles. Those with insecure-avoidant attachments minimized painful experiences and experienced either numbness or very negative emotions. Insecure-preoccupied victims tended to become overwhelmed by the experience.

2.4.4.4 Prior psychiatric diagnosis.

Research has shown that pre-existing psychological problems are likely to result in worse symptomatology after trauma and greater difficulty rebuilding assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Thus a history of other psychiatric disorders such as depression may make it more difficult to engage in meaning making.

2.4.4.5 Individual characteristics, gender and ethnicity.

A number of individual differences affect the meaning making process. Personality characteristics such as self-efficacy, locus of control, hardiness, flexibility, optimism as well as the ability to approach problems in a novel way and a tendency to act upon the environment to bring order out of chaos, are implicated in successful coping (Brit et al., 1998; Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, cited in Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Tedeschi, 1999). Aldwin and Levenson (2004), Lechner and Antoni (2004), Linley and Joseph (2004), Parks (2004) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), cite personality characteristics such as extraversion, openness to experience and feeling emotion and the experience of positive emotion as additional factors positively affecting meaning making. A person's ability to manage distressing emotions initially after the trauma allows cognitive processing to occur (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Janoff-Bulman (1992) notes that it is often the people with the most resilience whose core schemas are most violated. However, these may also be the individuals who are able to rebuild a new assumptive world more easily as they have access to a healthy psychological make up.

Women tend to report higher levels of PTG than men (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Parks, 2004). Other studies show that race and socioeconomic status are related to PTG. In a study of cancer patients, non-whites participants reported finding more meaning than white participants (Lechner & Antoni, 2004). In a meta-analysis of PTG articles from the last six years, Park and Helgeson (2006, p. 792) found that "ethnic minorities were more likely to report experiencing growth". This was verified by a similar recent meta-analysis by Helgeson, Reynolds and Tomich (2006, p. 811) who suggest that perhaps minorities greater experience of adversity lead "to a stronger pattern of deriving something good from the bad."

2.4.4.6 Social support.

A number of theorists point to the importance of social support as a mitigating factor in the meaning making process (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2004; Lechner & Antoni, 2004). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) postulate that the opportunity to disclose thoughts and feelings to supportive others who are able to tolerate the survivor's emotional distress enhances cognitive processing and thus the possibilities of growth. In addition, Neimeyer (2004) argues that narrative reconstruction does not occur in an individual vacuum. Retelling the trauma narrative at an interpersonal level allows validation and alternate constructions of the experience (Harvey, Barnett & Overstreet, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2004). However, Neimeyer (2004) cautions that some narratives are not socially sanctioned and telling them interpersonally may result in a lack of this necessary support.

2.4.4.7 Culture.

Morris (2005) states that cultural factors may account for some differences in the expression of the meanings assigned to events. For instance, McMillan (2004) postulates that culture would influence pre-trauma schema, beliefs and goals, the types of trauma individuals may go through, the management of emotional distress, the way life narratives are developed, the rumination style used and the types and quantity of social support offered. Regarding pre-trauma schema and beliefs for instance, large parts of the South African population understand themselves collectively rather than individually. A number of researchers point out that in collective cultures, where the self is understood as interdependent, individuals are more sensitive to context than those from individualist cultures (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Gardner, Gabriel & Lee, 1999; Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura & Larsen, 2003). Neimeyer explains that reconstruction of a narrative draws on the social or cultural sphere. Within these spheres are mythic stories and cultural tales that serve as sources of meaning as the individual integrates the trauma into the life narrative (Neimeyer, 2004). Pals and Adams (2004, p. 67) explain also that "culture provides guidelines for what constitutes a tellable, coherent narrative". Thus certain accounts or meanings that are socially unacceptable may not be expressed. On the other hand, Janoff-Bulman (1992) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) argue that widely held cultural beliefs often go unchallenged and are thus very susceptible to be shattered following a trauma, as they are relatively rigid and inflexible. With few or no counterarguments to

defend them, it is possible that, following a trauma, shattered cultural beliefs would be the most visible (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

2.4.4.8 Subsequent events.

Calhoun and Tedeschi (2004) state that the possibilities of PTG are mitigated by subsequent events following the initial trauma and that the trajectories of PTG are multiple. For instance, Harvey, Barnett and Overstreet (2004) point out that where individuals, such as those in midlife, experience numerous losses at the same time, PTG may be extremely delayed or not occur at all. Similarly Calhoun and Tedeschi (2004) note that PTG will only result and be sustained when changed schemas are acted upon. This acting will be contingent on personality factors and the response of the social environment.

2.4.4.9 Time since trauma.

Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) propose that PTG takes time and increases with time. However, Wortman (2004) cites a number of studies (Davis et al., 2000; Frazier et al. 2001, cited in Wortman, 2004; McMillen et al., 1997) in which growth took place from two to six weeks following a trauma. Other studies (Frazier et al., 2001, cited in Wortman, 2004) found that growth decreased over time in sexual assault victims.

In examining the narratives of South African crime survivors it is important to hold the above in mind as factors that could hinder or colour the meaning making and PTG processes. In the next section the importance of giving voice to the experience of crime victims for society as a whole is examined.

2.5 Implications of Articulation of Individual Experience for Society

Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) suggest that positive change in society can occur where traumas such as war, economic hardship or, in the case of South Africa, crime, are widely shared and integrated into social schema. For instance, Japan changed from a militaristic to a pacifistic society after WWII (Tedeschi, 1999). In order for social change to occur it is suggested that individual narratives are articulated, shared and integrated into social narratives (Tedeschi, 1999).

This may be done in a variety of ways. For instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission allowed for changes in individual and social schemas through the sharing of narratives of human rights abuses (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Those who did not experience the trauma directly had the opportunity to experience the trauma, and any subsequent PTG, vicariously (Tedeschi, 1999). One might argue too that research into the experiences of survivors of violent crime in South Africa may serve a similar function. For example, a number of South African crime trauma survivors writing about their experiences, have resulted in social changes (Rozowsky, 2002; Smith 2001; Thamm, 1998). Journalist Charlene Smith was raped at knife point in her home in Johannesburg in 1999. She published an article about her rape and possible HIV infection a week later (Smith, 2001). This narrative provided a platform from which she challenged South African societies' dominant narratives about sexual violence, women's liberation, trauma management and HIV/AIDS (Smith, 2001). Articulating individual narratives has the power to create controversy, break the silence and therefore to change perceptions of violent crime and its effects on people in South Africa. In turn this could potentially initiate action to remedy crime and the lack of resources for violent crime survivors in South Africa. Charlene Smith's campaign lead to the founding of specialised rape courts and rape trauma units at police stations, the first rape insurance policies worldwide and changes in rape legislation (Smith, 2001). As Tedeschi (1999) notes, it is consciousness raising that "sets the stage for action against the repetition of trauma" (p. 334).

In the following section the methodology used in this research on meaning making and PTG in violent crime survivors is presented.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the research question and rationale for the research design are discussed. Next the sample, instrument and recruiting and interviewing procedures are explained. Finally, ethical considerations and reflexivity issues pertinent to the research are outlined.

3.1 Research Aim

The aim of the research was to qualitatively explore the meaning attributions, in terms of comprehensibility and significance, held by South African crime survivors in relation to the event. This research is an exploratory and descriptive study because of the paucity of local data in this area. It aims to see if existing international research on meaning making and PTG is relevant in the South African context.

3.2 Research Design

Quantitative research is particularly useful for experimental verification, hypothesis testing and generalizing to populations, while qualitative research is particularly geared towards discovery, exploration and hypothesis generation, and findings are generalized to theory rather than populations (Burck, 2005; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). Davis (2003) explains that, in recent decades, researchers have predominantly assumed quantitative approaches to study the symptoms of trauma. Most studies on trauma examine the causes and effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. They are often quantitative studies that make use of scales and attempt to establish relationships between variables. Brett (1996) issues a number of warnings against the use of quantitative approaches such as symptom inventories to study trauma. Focusing research on certain criteria can hinder alternate forms or variations of what is being researched. Brett (1996) for instance, explains that a symptom or criterion approach to PTSD may obscure other essential features of a syndrome. For example, many people experience physical symptoms after a trauma, which are not included in the PTSD criteria (Kulka, Schlenger, Fairbank, Hough, Jordan, Marmar & Weiss, 1990; McFarlane & Yehuda 1996; Van der Kolk et al., 1996).

In the trauma field, there is thus a need for descriptive “insider” perspectives to complement these quantitative approaches (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Using

qualitative approaches allows “a panoply of perspectives” (Neimeyer, 2003, p.264). It thus allows trauma survivors to express alternative perspectives to those embodied in trauma symptom inventories and scales. Recently, despite cautions against only employing quantitative approaches to the study of trauma and perhaps demonstrating the repetition compulsion in trauma research discussed in the literature review (Van der Kolk et al., 1996) there seems to have been a return to the quantitative approaches. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996, cited in Morris, Shakespeare-Finch & Newbery, 2005) have developed the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) which encompasses five areas of expected growth following trauma. Similarly, Foa and colleagues (Foa, Ehlers, Clark, Tollin & Orsillo, 1999) has developed a self-report checklist of post-trauma beliefs. It seems impossible that these inventories capture the whole range of posttraumatic responses (Aldwin & Levenson, 2004; McMillan, 2004; Pals & McAdams, 2004; Parks, 2004). In order to avoid the potential limitations of the symptom inventory approach and not to forget the lessons of the past, this study employs a qualitative approach to studying meaning making and PTG among crime survivors.

It was decided to employ case study methodology. Yin (1981, 2003) explains that the distinguishing feature of the case study is that it is used to examine “a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context” (Yin, 1981, p. 59). As meaning making and PTG are generated out of and embedded in context, a descriptive case study approach was chosen because it “presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context” rather than seeking to establish relationships between variables (Yin, 2003, p. 5).

Case studies can be conducted using qualitative or quantitative data gained from fieldwork, archival records, verbal reports etc (Yin, 1981; 2003). According to Kohler Riessman, the “primary way individuals make sense of experience is by casting it in narrative form” (1993, p.4). Thus semi-structured interviews were chosen as the source of data for these descriptive case studies. It was decided that interviews were the best way of generating personal narratives of crime events and thus allowing a descriptive insider perspective.

Analysis of the descriptive case study design was based on theory outlined in the literature review. Yin (2003) explains that theory is important as it informs the researcher of what is relevant to, and should be included in, the study (Yin, 2003). The theory in the literature review provided a pattern of information against which similar or different patterns found in the case study analysis could be compared and commented on (Yin, 2003). The literature review outlined the stages and processes of meaning making, types of meaning making and PTG, and factors likely to mitigate meaning making and PTG, hypothesized to be found in the narratives of survivors of crime. The processes, types of meanings and PTG, and mitigating factors identified in the case studies used for this research, could be compared to those found in the literature.

Yin (1999, 2003) points out that case studies are useful “where the number of variables of interest far outstrips the number of data points” (Yin, 1994, p.13). The number of possible meanings that survivors of crime may attribute to their experiences and the number of variables possibly mitigating the meaning making process are numerous. Thus case studies based on interviews allowed for multiple meanings to be articulated by participants. As discussed in the literature review, meaning making may be drawn from particular social and cultural sources in different contexts in which individuals are embedded. The use of a methodology such as the case study, which is geared towards examining contextual influences, was ideal as survivors of crime in South Africa may articulate specific meanings different from those described in international research.

A further reason for employing a qualitative descriptive case study methodology to explore meaning making and PTG is the method’s strength in increasing internal validity. In other words, in research examining a phenomenon such as meaning making, case studies based on interviews may be a superior method of assessing this phenomenon. One of the concerns of researchers in the field of meaning making and PTG has been the possibility of reporter bias resulting in the phenomenon of illusory growth. This is encouraged when employing the positivist approach of a symptom inventory. It has been suggested that participants may comply with a checklist in order to convey themselves in a positive light (Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 2004). Assessing narratives to see to what extent new schemas naturally emerge in the

context of a crime survivor's own narrative understanding of the event is less likely to result in reporter bias, and more likely to provide a deeper understanding of meaning making and PTG and the function (real or illusory) that it serves in that particular person's life (Pals & Adams, 2004). Nolen-Hoeksema and Davis (2004) point out that it is easier to be sceptical about life changes ticked off a checklist than it is to be of those detailed in a personal account. However, this raises the issue of the generalizeability of case studies.

Critics of case study methodology argue that case study research lacks external validity as it does not result in generalizeable conclusions (Tellis, 1997). Yin (1994) argues that case studies are generalizeable, but based on different criteria. A case study can have generalizeability if it is able to provide thick description, understanding and explanation of phenomena. What is found is generalized not to populations but to theory (Stake, 2000; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1999). The aim of this research is to compare how survivors of crime make sense of their experiences in relation to existing theory on meaning making in other trauma populations, and possibly to inform research on interventions aimed survivors of crime. Findings then are aimed at thickening theory in the area of crime victims, for which a case study design would then be an appropriate approach.

The literature on case studies points out a number of ways of increasing validity in case studies. Some authors argue that multiple case studies enhance validity. Commonalities across multiple cases potentially "strengthen results by replicating the pattern matching, thus increasing the robustness of the theory" (Tellis, 1997, p. 4). It was decided to employ a multiple case design (Yin, 2003) or collective case study research design (Stake, 2000). Multiple or collective case studies allow the researcher to "jointly study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Although the researcher looks for what is particular about each case, commonalities are also noted (Stake, 2000).

3.3 Sample

Stake (2000) and Yin (2003) explain that a unique and difficult aspect of case studies in the social sciences, and particularly in collective case studies, is the necessity of choosing cases for investigation. A central question is what kind of cases would be

relevant to the research question (Yin, 2003). Stake (2000) suggests that researchers select cases that offer the most opportunity to learn. This potential for learning is influenced by factors such as accessibility.

For the current study it was decided to make use of the Survivors of Crime Counselling (SOC) Service at Rondebosch Police Station in Cape Town. This service offers counselling to victims of crime at the police station trauma room and thus allowed the researcher access to survivors of crime. SOC offers a short term debriefing and supportive service to victims of violent crime. Survivors are offered a maximum of three sessions. The procedure for recruiting participants to the study had to be revised during the course of the research due to difficulties obtaining participants. Initially a meeting was organized with the SOC counsellors of Rondebosch Police Station to ask for help with sampling. Counsellors were asked to inform clients of the study in the last counselling session with each client. Willing participants would be asked to sign the consent form and given a copy to take home. It was agreed the researcher would collect these consent forms and the names and numbers of willing participants every second week from SOC. After a six to eight week period, which would allow time for the stages of manageability to be negotiated and meaning making to commence, the researcher would phone the participants and see whether they still want to participate in the study. The referral process, however, had to be revised as many of the counsellors were uncomfortable speaking to newly traumatized victims about the study.

It was therefore decided to go through the SOC records and to choose participants with whom counsellors were familiar and therefore able to speak to about the study. This proved advantageous as most of the participants had experienced their trauma at least six months prior. As previously mentioned, meaning making takes time to occur after a traumatic event (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). An SOC counsellor called prospective participants to ascertain whether they wanted to be part of the research. Once verbal consent had been gained the researcher contacted the participant to set up an interview.

The participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- They had experienced a criminal victimization, excluding rape or sexual assault. (It was decided to exclude victims of sexual assault and rape as a number of other issues, such as gender power dynamics, enter the experience of such victims.)
- During the SOC counselling sessions, they had expressed fearing for their lives or fearing bodily harm during the crime.
- At least 6 months had lapsed since the traumatic event, in order to allow time for meaning making to occur (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).
- They had given consent for their stories to be used in the research.

Authors have noted that recruiting trauma survivors for research is very difficult (Yick & Berl, 2005). Recruitment proved to be difficult for the current study. A number of survivors of crime did not want to take part in the study. Others agreed but then did not arrive for the interview. It was initially planned to recruit 16 participants but due to these difficulties it was only possible to attain 10 participants for the study. This difficulty necessitated the use of one participant for whom the time lapse since the trauma was only four months.

Stake (2000) also suggests that some typicality, but also variety, are important in case selection. Nine participants had attended one counselling session only and the tenth participant had received three counselling sessions at the SOC. The participants varied in terms of age, ranging from 18 to 75 years old. Participants had suffered a variety of crimes, including one cash heist shooting, one armed housebreaking, three armed car hijackings, three armed muggings, one armed robbery at work and one witnessed shooting of an acquaintance. Gender was almost equally represented with four males and six females taking part in the study. Finally, participants were from a variety of racial groups¹ and included two white men, one coloured man, four white females and two coloured females.

3.4 Instrument

As the aim of the data collection was to generate a rich set of materials interviews were chosen as the instrument (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). It was decided that using

¹ It was decided to include race in the description of participant demographics as many participants grappled with issues of race in understanding the violent crime they had suffered.

a scale such as Tedeschi and Calhoun's (1996, cited in Morris, Shakespeare-Finch & Newbery, 2005) may limit the number of responses of participants, whereas interviews would give participants the opportunity to more fully describe their experiences without limiting them to specific responses. Tellis (1997) proposes that interviews may be open-ended, focused or structured. Burck (2005) explains that the use of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to use the interview schedule as a guide, while at the same time leaving room to follow and explore the participant's idiosyncratic meanings. It was thus decided to use a semi-structured interview schedule. (See Appendix A)

The interview schedule comprised a number of initial focused questions aimed at eliciting mainly demographic information. A number of questions regarding the presence of childhood abuse and prior contact with psychiatric services were also included to explore factors that may mitigate meaning making. In order to elicit the trauma narrative and allow it to develop spontaneously, the interview schedule thereafter employed an open ended question. Participants were asked to comment about their experience of the traumatic event (Tellis, 1997). *"Tell me about your experience of the crime committed against you that resulted in you attending the SOC?"*

Suddaby (2006) considers it important to be informed by current literature and theory so as not to produce a random mass of descriptive material. As Tellis (1997, p. 7) notes "case study questions ...must serve to remind the person of the data to be collected and its possible sources". Thus once the participant had constructed an open-ended narrative about the traumatic event, more focused questions aimed at eliciting more detail about meaning making and PTG were asked.

In order to assess whether dependency and trust, safety, personal sense of power, independence, esteem and intimacy schema had been disrupted, the following type of focused questions were asked: *Have you noticed any changes in yourself during and after the event compared to before the event? Has the event affected other areas of your life and if so in what areas and how?* To look for meaning making related to comprehensibility, questions were aimed at assessing whether an explanatory account of the trauma had been developed. *How have you made sense of why people commit*

crimes like this? How do you make sense of the event happening to you specifically?

Finally, all participants were assessed for meaning associated with significance/purpose or PTG through the following type of questions. *Where do you draw strength from in order to cope with what's happened to you? Has there been anything of value that you have got out of the experience?* In order to get an idea of negative symptoms or meanings, the interview concluded with questions such as *what is the hardest thing you are still struggling with and do you feel back to normal in the way you felt prior to the event?*

The researcher decided on the grounded theory approach to the collecting and analysis of the data. The grounded theory approach impacts on interviewing, as it holds that analysis of initial interviews may be used to modify the interview format (Burck, 2005). Although early trauma, and thus the possibility of the effect of pre-trauma schema had been assessed for, when gathering demographic information at the onset of the interview a number of the interviews seemed to indicate that other early experiences may have played a large role in meaning making. A question specifically related to this was later added: *Is there any other early hardship that you think may have prepared you for this traumatic event?*

3.5 Procedure

The interviews were conducted either at the homes of participants or at the SOC trauma room. Adopting an empathic, warmth and non-judgemental stance during the initial phase and throughout the interview aimed to allow rapport to be established and to create an atmosphere in which participants could feel safe to talk about their experience. At the beginning of the interview, the consent form was discussed with participants and signed. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and no time limit was set, although interviews took approximately one hour on average. The raw data was transcribed from the tape recorded interview sessions by the researcher.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out using analytic techniques from grounded theory. According to Burck (2005, p. 244), grounded theory was “designed to help researchers elicit and analyze qualitative data to identify important categories in the

material with the aim of generating ideas and theory 'grounded' in the data". As such it is a suitable strategy for the analysis of meaning making and PTG amongst survivors of crime in this study.

Grounded theory developed in response to renewed interest in qualitative research in the 1960's (Charmaz, 1995). It was a reaction to the extreme positivism that had characterized most social research (Suddaby, 2006). Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory (1967 in Suddaby, 2006) challenged the notion that natural science and social science could be studied in a similar manner. Grounded theory was aimed at generating theory from close inspection of qualitative data gathered in settings such as interviews (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). Essentially it is a system of collecting and analyzing data to generate a theoretical framework that explains the collected data (Charmaz, 1995). Alternatively, grounded theory may be used to elaborate and modify existing theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The latter makes it applicable for this study on meaning making and PTG. Charmaz (1995) explains that grounded theory may be used from a positivist or constructivist approach. This study employs the latter approach, by not employing strategies too rigidly or prescriptively and focusing on meaning to further interpretative understanding.

Grounded theory makes use of categories as the major unit of analysis (Corbin, 1986). Categories are viewed as conceptual codes showing the relationship between data and theory (Swanson, 1986). Analysis was divided into two stages. In the first stage, each phrase in the text was assigned a code (Burck, 2005; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). The emergence of categories was facilitated by asking questions about the data under study such as: what action is the participant engaging in here? (Corbin, 1986; Swanson, 1986). Swanson (1986) suggests the next task is to describe the category. The full range or extremes of the categories were then described by the researcher in the coding schedule (Swanson, 1986). Next the researcher looked for and described variations by examining similarities and differences between categories (Corbin, 1986; Pidgeon & Haywood, 1997 and Swanson, 1986). This is referred to in the grounded theory literature as the process of constant comparison (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997).

In the second stage of analysis, which Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) term core analysis, initial categories were merged to create more conceptual and interpretative categories. These are termed researcher categories, higher order categories or core categories. Core categories were obtained by arranging categories in a hierarchical order (Corbin, 1986). This was aided by sorting and grouping related sets of concepts through diagrammatic representation (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). Categories were linked by moving a category from a lower to higher level of abstraction and by posing questions about its relationships to other categories (Corbin, 1986). Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) suggest that the researcher summarizes why all these entries have been included under a particular label and propose that a definition may be written for each concept. Categories that did not fit in with the thickened categories were dropped (trimmed) or a new category of a higher level of abstraction was created under which these outliers could fit (Corbin, 1986).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Stake (2000) explains that “the value of the best research is not likely to outweigh injury to a person exposed” (p. 447). However, as Greenbank (2003) explains, it is often difficult to evaluate costs and benefits when carrying out research. According to Punch (1999), ethical concerns in research center on harm, consent, deception and privacy or confidentiality. This study attempted to uphold ethical considerations in the following ways.

3.7.1 Informed Consent and Deception

Participants were requested to sign an informed consent form at the interview, agreeing to the use of their stories in the study (See Appendix B). Decisions about conflicting factors, such as what is revealed to participants about the purpose of a study versus the need not to influence participant’s responses, involve value judgments (Greenbank, 2003). The consent form stated that the research would help develop an understanding of the process people go through after the experience of being a victim of crime. It was not mentioned that the study looked particularly at meaning making and PTG, as it was decided this would encourage reporter bias. Punch (1998, p. 174) explains that a “moderate measure of field-related deception” is acceptable providing “the interests of participants are protected”.

3.7.2 Harm

A number of researchers indicate that participation in research is not associated with harm to trauma survivors and is often experienced by them as beneficial (Griffin, Resick, Waldrop & Mechanic, 2003). However, the consent form explained possible risks involved in participating in the study. Participants were informed that recounting the trauma narrative could result in some distress. It was stated that should this occur, the researcher should be contacted immediately and a referral would be made to an organization that could assist the participant. The Trauma Centre in Woodstock, Cape Town was selected as the organization to which such participants would be referred. The SOC is not able to provide ongoing counseling, while the Trauma Centre offers longer term work. Prior to commencing the interview, the researcher told participants they had the right to refuse to answer any of the questions and to stop the interview at any time they wished. The participant was encouraged to ask questions before the interview commenced and again at the end of the interview.

3.7.3 Privacy and Confidentiality

Stake (2000) notes that those whose experiences are portrayed “risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing...” (p. 447). Thus Punch (1998, p. 175) explains that use should be made of “various safeguards” to “protect the privacy and identity of research subjects”. The confidentiality of participants was ensured. The consent form stated that “*Any information obtained during this study will remain absolutely confidential and your story will remain anonymous.*” Once the consent form was signed, the participant’s name and telephone details were known only to SOC counselors or the researcher. In the analysis and writing up of the results the participants were given pseudonyms and numbers, and identifying data were changed.

3.8 Reflexivity

Although ethical issues were considered prior to research, ethical dilemmas characterize the entire research process and it is extremely difficult to control for all possibilities. Thus as Punch (1998) states, when undertaking qualitative research it is important that researchers “come clean” about the politics of the research process, including agendas and subjective influence on research (Punch, 1998, p. 180).

The concept of reflexivity has arisen out of the change in research traditions and trends in society (Etherington, 2004). Traditional positivist epistemology of the natural sciences assumes that there is a single truth awaiting discovery by a neutral observer (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Greenbank, 2003; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). In contrast, constructivist epistemology holds that all knowing is contingent on subjective interpretation of meaning (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. These researchers emphasize “the value laden nature of inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8).

Positivist beliefs in a measurable reality existing independently from subjectivity have increasingly given way to notions that even objective observers bring prior history, knowledge and culture to their understanding of what is observed (Etherington, 2004). Denzin, Lincoln and Giardina (2006) have argued for a qualitative research paradigm committed to social justice. Feminist, postmodernist and social constructionist approaches, in particular, have encouraged transparency of belief and values in the research process to create greater equality between researcher and participant in the research process (Etherington, 2004) and to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research report (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These changes have resulted in an emphasis on being reflexive in the research process and report writing.

There is no one meaning of the term reflexivity in the literature (Buckner, 2005). Walsh (2003), for instance identifies personal, interpersonal, methodological and contextual reflexivity. However there does seem to be a common denominator in all of the definitions (Buckner, 2005). “The purpose of reflexivity is to enhance the quality of the research through its ability to extend our understanding of how our positions and interests as researchers affect all stages of the research process” (Primeau, 2003, p.11). Reflexivity thus potentially counters subjective bias, explains methodological choice and is a way of constructing a bridge between research and context (Etherington, 2004).

Finlay (2002) explains that researchers have used a variety of means to express reflexivity. Researchers may use introspection (Finlay, 2002). Thus reflexivity about

moral values (what an individual feel is the right thing to do), competency values (what is believed to be the most effective way of doing something) and personal values (what a person hopes to achieve for themselves) would be essential (Greenbank, 2002).

Greenbank (2003) notes that, when researchers decide on a research methodology, they are invariably influenced by their ontological and epistemological positions. The researcher in this study is located within a social constructivist research tradition, which affected the research question and instrument. A case study methodology that would be able to give voice to the multiple meanings and experiences of survivors of crime was favoured over the PTG inventory. The researcher favoured a systematic approach to analysis, and thus chose the fairly prescriptive Grounded Theory methodology, but with a constructionist approach (Charmaz, 2005). Hall and Callery (2002) have criticized grounded theory writers for not adequately attending to the effects of the researcher-participant interaction and how this effects the construction of data. Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) and Charmaz (1995) note for instance that the researcher's implicit hypothesis and theoretical interests will always influence the grounded theory analysis of the text, while the researcher's social and political positioning will influence the researcher-participant relationships and the analysis of the data (Finlay, 2002; Greenberg, 2002). Thus intersubjective factors affecting the interviews are examined below.

Firstly, the researcher was a white middle-class woman in post-Apartheid South Africa. It is possible that this may have inhibited or limited articulation of certain narratives by black or coloured participants. In turn a degree of 'white guilt' may also have influenced the manner in which the researcher chose to interpret certain phenomena. As a clinical psychologist trainee, the researcher may also have tended to interact with participants as a therapist, possibly encouraging certain themes and narratives while silencing others.

As previously stated, Lechner and Antoni (2004), caution against the western concept of positive thinking in studies of meaning making and PTG. It is possible that both participants and the researcher may have been influenced by this value, resulting in a down-playing of distress narratives.

Finally, there are different ways of being reflexive in the written report. Primeau (2003) explains that, traditionally, reflexive statements are published separately from the analysis in introductory chapters or methodological appendices. This may give the appearance that subjective aspects of the research are not essential and it is suggested instead they be included in the text to legitimize the analysis. Issues of reflexivity in this study are discussed in the conclusion.

In the following chapter the findings of the research will be presented.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The analysis of participants' interviews resulted in twenty categories that could be grouped under five broad thematic areas related to meaning making and PTG (See Table 1). These five thematic areas were: disrupted schema, precursors to meaning making, meaning making strategies, grappling with meaning, and significance/benefits or areas of PTG identified. The categories are discussed below and their relationship to existing literature is noted.

| Table 1. Categories | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Category Name | Description | Sample Quote |
| Disrupted Schema | | |
| 1. Feeling unsafe | A disruption in safety and control schema evident in concerns about own and others safety and fears of future violent crime. | A: You definitely like very insecure. Just felt very vulnerable that this is reality, the whole time you have to be on your guard. |
| 2. Distrusting strangers | A disruption in trust schema evident in distrusting strangers. Race was a salient criterion for judging strangers. | E: Strangers, I am um very aware of people as such. You know if someone looks suspicious I will, you know I am more street wise, you know if something looks suspicious I'll get away from whatever is happening. |
| 3. A changed self | A disruption in self trust and control schema as evident in the experience of the self as changed in some important way, including a new distressing racist schema. | B: Ja and I mean I'm a very independent person and it's not nice to have it taken away...um its like now they've taken that away from me you know as well my freedom ... H: I didn't see his face really but he is pitch black and huge and after that you know I come from a political back ground where you don't look at people and colour and you don't speak to people about colour but after that I notice black people and that bothered me too, that hurts me |
| Precursors to Meaning Making | | |
| 4. Valuing social support | Social support provided initial containment and opportunities for sharing that are documented as precursors to meaning making. | E: My girlfriend now, um we weren't dating then but we were very close, well we still are, we were best friends and like a lot of the time little by little just spoke, like just released a little bit here a little bit there. You know she just showed love, I like just cuddle, just hold you know just something like that where I felt love ja. She supported me. |
| 5. Changing coping styles | A process of letting go of old coping styles and being open to new ways of making sense of & coping with the trauma. | C: Well I think it was putting on a brave face really. While I did take control, I don't know necessarily if I did it in the right way, I think that it was probably too quick for me to try and make out that I was under control. |
| Meaning Making Strategies: Rebuilding safety, control, predictability & some interpersonal trust | | |
| 6. Behavioural Self blame versus Random Chance. | Blaming own behaviour or random chance for the self's involvement in the violent crime. | B: I could've gone more main road routes but anyway...I was alone in the car cranked up the music then I was distracted I suppose... if he (husband) was driving would it of happened? Was it because I was female? Or was it just the car, I mean now they were getting desperate... C: I'm usually quite vigilant about making sure that nothing is going on in the road and I also noticed that none of my house mates were there because we all |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | <p>park just outside the garage there. So I wasn't vigilant about looking. Took my time you know, nothing bad has ever happened too me.</p> <p>H: I don't always think they want to kill you I think if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time you're in trouble</p> |
| 7. Distinguishing between trustworthy and untrustworthy strangers. | Identifying factors that may have warned that the perpetrator would commit the violent crime or factors that likewise may indicate a stranger is trustworthy or not. | <p>D: He had no feeling in his eyes. We were like this close to each other and staring at each other and there was just nothing there. Like no humanness at all...</p> <p>D: Ja so my faith in humanity was restored by that little guy who found my bag and phoned everyone... It's a bit of an adjustment, it like does knock your faith in humanity a bit you know. Some of the people out there aren't so bad and then you have to kind of figure out which ones you can trust.</p> <p>"I don't know. When he started shooting, when the shots were fired I didn't duck down. That must have saved my life..."</p> |
| 8. Protective behaviours that prevented a worse outcome during the crime | Identifying behaviours engaged in during the crime that prevented worse outcomes. | |
| 9. Religious protection | Using religious or cultural beliefs to see the self as protected by god and the event as a demonstration of god's care | E: Before this one before this one that night I told myself I was going to die it was my night but my ancestors and God looked after me, ja you know... |
| 10. Comparisons as protection | <p>Making the self feel safe and protected by luck in comparison to worse outcomes</p> <p>Comparing a decrease in posttraumatic symptoms over time</p> | <p>F: Ja, I mean I was so lucky they were not tsotsis, they would of killed me. They would of taken my phone everything you know... They wouldn't think twice you know what I mean. That was my luck. I was lucky that was my luck, I was so lucky. I was really so lucky.</p> <p>G: That was one of the things they tell me in the counselling sessions at the police station was that in a months time you're going to be forgetting to lock the windows, I mean the door... Let me say I haven't noticed which means that obviously, that I guess it's true, I can't dispute that. The fact I haven't noticed means I've become less conscious of it you know</p> |
| 11. Blaming social and economic problems | Answering why violent crime happens in general by blaming theoretically changeable social and economic problems. | <p>J: there's been a lot of cracks on how these gangs operate and what they (gang members) do and how they live they not full filling any function other than selfish.</p> <p>E: gang initiations um, drug abuse or it's their job or. There's quite a few things that could influence it. I know that a lot of gang initiations are done through hi jacking and shootings...</p> <p>H: You know I feel sometimes people are out desperate they haven't got money you know none of us has really been without food</p> |
| Grappling with Meaning | | |
| 12. Struggling with minimizing violent crime | Struggling to make meaning of a context that minimizes violent crime & its effects | B: Ja everyone says ah you so lucky he didn't touch you you so lucky you so lucky I don't feel lucky... |
| 13. Struggling with living in SA | Struggling with living in a context with problems that cause violent crime. | D: I was saying, stay in the country and be part of the solution, work, create money and jobs sort of like oh I'm not running away. But like I said I have got to revalue that because if someone shot my Mom, then I don't know if I could stay in the country... |
| 14. Struggling with interpersonal violence | Struggling with interpersonal trust destroyed by the violence aspect of the crime. | I: there's a cross over between stealing to help yourself survive and hurting another person to do that because I don't believe you have to kill somebody to survive or hurt somebody to survive... At least I can't understand their mentality behind hurting other people so... |

| Identifying Significance/Benefits or PTG | | |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15. Not finding benefit | 3 participants found no value or felt that the negative consequences outweighed the benefits | I: I suppose I didn't really learn anything that helpful. |
| 16. Finding value | 3 participants asserted that the violent crime experience had been more beneficial than detrimental. | J: No I don't that's the nice thing I haven't I haven't walked away with anything less, if anything I've walked away positive. |
| 17. Changed relationships | Identifying positive changes in relationships | E: I'm a lot closer to my girlfriend. |
| 18. Appreciating life | Identifying a renewed appreciation of life since the crime | G: No, I, I think right from the moment after I knew that they had left that I was ok I must really say we became more appreciative of my life |
| 19. Philosophy of life | Identifying that since the crime they had adopted a more helpful philosophy of life | F: To me the bad stuff taught me a lot and then I gained a lot because they say if you can...get a slap on this side you have to cover, don't slap me again on this side, a you must learn from what happened on this side... |
| 20. Losing naivety & gaining maturity | Identifying a more mature attitude to life. | C: It has definitely made me more aware, it really has. I was beginning to take it for granted that I was one of the untouchables you know, ah I hope it never happens to me you know, one of those |

4.1 Disrupted Schema

The first three themes yielded by the data analysis appear to indicate a shattering of core assumptions or schema related to safety, trust and self-worth.

4.1.1 Safety and Control Schema

Seven individuals expressed fear for their own safety. They commented that they felt insecure, unsafe and vulnerable since the violent crime.

"You're definitely like very insecure. Just felt very vulnerable that this is reality, the whole time you have to be on your guard." (A)

"Well obviously a lot more nervous um as I said for three weeks or so I refused to go out at night and I mean You'll never just nonchalantly enter your driveway and just that its out there all the time and you're watched and just that there's such evil lurking all the time" (B)

"Just in that I'm a lot more hesitant really. I always want to check my back, But still the other night I was at work and I was supposed to lock up and I do sit in a very exposed area, there is just a glass door between me and the outside, The security guard sits just next to the door but its very exposed." (C)

"I feel less safe definitely; definitely...I'm feeling insecure...That, that being safe in my own house being safe in my environment just being safe...You know I'm scared all the time..." (H)

Four participants expressed this preoccupation with safety through comments about their increased concern for the safety of loved ones since the violent crime.

"So of course with the children growing up and coming in late at night and that kind of things you know you don't really rest until you know they are safe and that you got up and checked the doors are locked." (A)

"My Mom also she put a automatic gate, which I was very happy about at least it could mean that she wouldn't have to get out the car to open up the gate and then go down the driveway to close the gate. That was great. But the thing is you know she has got all around her property so many spots where she can be a soft target and she just refuses to do anything about it. She's got an alarm..." (C)

"Yes, yes I very much do that because now I have had an experience I expect that I can, because it was my experience and I know what it feels like, if there is anything I can do, I will make sure I can do it when people are alive by imposing, well not by imposing by offering my assistance like making sure they are safe all the time. I need to know they are going to be safe all the time..." (D)

"I am always cautious about my son because he is young and when he plays outside I always check him where is he playing, where is he going, who is he playing with? He mustn't go out on the corner, he must always be around here, because what is happening to the kids now in Cape Town is too bad, so that is why I'm so cautious about him,... Certain time he must be in the house because I don't want him to be missed or what ever." (F)

Seven participants expressed a fear of future violent crime.

“It (crime) is not a once off thing you know” (A)

“Just knowing that it could happen again at any moment and it could be worse than it was. Like it was a horrible experience but I’m ok, but if I go outside now and someone will shoot me and take my car. You always live with that in the back of your mind, but what can you really do about it. You just got to keep doing your thing and hope that it is not you.” (D)

“ I just know that it can happen any time, anywhere and I’m going to do what I can to prevent it...I think maybe I am a little more aware that something can happen you know anytime, anywhere. You know you can be out on the dance floor and you’ll get mugged. You know like anything can happen anytime, ja it’s like I mean.” (E)

“Inside of here you know, every 11th of June I had a fear of that things will happen again you know. I have a fear like that.” (F)

“I would say well the only thing is that I definitely have a fear you know under certain circumstances – that this could happen again and I want to live to know and I guess part of that fear is the fact that I have been there before.” (G)

These concerns suggest a shattering of the ‘benevolence of the world’ and ‘meaningfulness’ assumption described by Janoff-Bulman (1992). In particular, these three categories appear to reflect changes in schema based on the needs for safety (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998) and the extent to which survivors experience the world as predictable and controllable (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

4.1.2 Distrusting Others

Furthermore, seven participants explained that since the violent crime they had difficulty trusting strangers.

“I am generally a very open minded person, I trust very easily the first time, but once my trust has been broken I refuse to anymore. It takes a long time to

earn that trust back and in that way I feel maybe because my trust in human nature was compromised out in the road here I am a hell of a lot more skittish, just being exposed and being what you would think is vulnerable.” (C)

“Strangers, I am um very aware of people as such. You know if someone looks suspicious I will , you know I am more street wise, you know if something looks suspicious I’ll get away from whatever is happening.” (E)

“You know and mistrusting them (strangers) and don’t talk to me don’t greet me or, I got into that and then I fell, I got out of a taxi and I fell I missed the pavement and this young guy came to help me and I said don’t touch me and he looked at me and I thought my God what’s happening to me this guy is never going to help anybody he couldn’t understand you know...” (H)

“Like I generally see them, (strangers) as a threat.” (I)

These comments indicate that the benevolence of the world core assumption (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), and specifically schema related to the need to trust others (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998), had been disrupted by the experience of violent crime. Race was a salient criterion for judging the trustworthiness of strangers and the struggle with racism is discussed below.

4.1.3 Self-worth

In addition to a disrupted sense of safety, predictability and trust, six participants experienced themselves as changed in other important ways following the traumatic event.

“I now have a blood pressure, which I never had” (A).

“Ja and I mean I’m a very independent person and it’s not nice to have it taken away...” (B)

“I am usually very much a together and controlled person.” (C)

"I still go out and I still have fun but there are, I mean, I'm a lot more to myself. I mean like instead of going and chatting with everyone I would rather just be in my room and relax or whatever." (E)

"Yes and one day my friend said to me o my goodness you're huffy these days ... You know I mean that's not normally me I would just ignore it I can handle you..." (H)

As suggested by Janoff-Bulman (1992), this seems to indicate that since the violent crime, some participants experienced a disturbance in the self-worth core assumption (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) and specifically in the need for trust in and control over the self (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998).

However, there appeared to be a culturally specific assumption that, when shattered after a violent trauma, additionally affected the violent crime survivors sense of self-worth. Three survivors admitted to, and appeared extremely conflicted and distressed by, a new racist attitude that had emerged within themselves towards strangers after the violent crime.

"You know it's terrible. I hate that, kind of feeling because you know I treat everybody the same and I don't want to always think that when a person of colour comes to the door they are here to harm you. So that is bad. That is a big change in my life. Yes and it is very unfair to paint everybody with the same brush." (A)

"I am a lot more racist than I previously was, not open racist, but inside. Like if two coloured 'okes' walking towards me I will immediately assume something and I will get away from them and do something else you know. But I mean I still have coloured friends, I still have black friends." (E)

"No, no and I didn't see his face really but he is pitch black and huge and after that you know I come from a political back ground where you don't look at people and colour and you don't speak to people about colour but after that I notice black people and that bothered me to that hurts me because I came to

notice black men in particular you know and you must not get near me I don't want to be near you...Ja we were together the same cause and they weren't my enemy I didn't fight them now I've got a different enemy that I'm fighting. Ja I felt safe with them because I felt I felt comfortable with them because I loved them and now it's changed..." (H)

Janoff-Bulman (1992) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) suggest that cultural schemas are often most susceptible to shattering following a trauma. Perhaps because of the history of apartheid, there appears to be a powerful cultural schema in the South African context that holds that individuals should not be judged by race and to judge in this way makes one a bad person. Participants who had taken part in the struggle or who had grown up in an integrated country post-apartheid were additionally impacted in terms of self-worth when they began to judge strangers based on the race of the perpetrator of the violent crime they had experienced.

In conclusion, the above themes indicate that, as documented in the international literature, survivors of violent crime in this South African sample experience the shattering of the benevolence of the world, meaningfulness, and self-worth core assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). In addition, in the post-apartheid South African context, changes in racial schema following a violent crime, further add to the shattering of self-worth core assumptions. Next, precursors to the meaning making processes are discussed.

4.2 Precursors to Meaning Making

Two themes evident in the analysis appear to relate to factors documented in the literature that affect survivors' ability to engage in meaning making strategies.

4.2.1 Valuing Social Support

The role of social support as a mitigating factor in the meaning making process was referred to throughout the interviews. The 'valuing of social support' theme comprised of three subcategories. Firstly, in four participants narratives', mention was made of, and value assigned to, the support of others in dealing with the distressing practical details of managing the aftermath of the trauma.

“I mean the oddest people that, someone that, your child’s schools friend phoned me and like begged me to please get help you know I was mugged or whatever three years ago and didn’t get it sorted out and it still haunts me today like all these people coming forward and just they wanna adamant like you go...there were a lot of kindness and that from unexpected places you know like at the bank even you know when I didn’t have papers or whatever and they were very understanding and they sort of gave leeway there and the traffic department when I wanted to trace the numbers.....you know you saw a different side to people and very understanding” (B)

“The next morning my sister, shame she was so sweet, went down to ‘X’ parking lot and explained to them that I had lost my parking ticket and my car keys, then the AA came and they towed my car to this place in Claremont, but the guy there was no we can’t do it it has to be VW, so I had to phone them again. As I was waiting for the tow truck to come back my boss phoned me. He goes like ‘Are you ok’? Ja, why? ‘The accountant has just phoned me, someone has your bag’. So I was like ‘Oh, ok’” (D)

“I run so fast I was so scared and then I arrived at home I told my mom and then my mom she did some water thing with sugar for me and then said wait here she went to house opposite then knocked on the neighbour he’s got a car and then she told him and he come over and said OK let go there.” (F)

The importance of the role of social support was evident in three narratives of despondence where survivors had received negative reactions from others following the violent crime.

“But I mean that was one of my experiences at the time was you tell people what happened to you and then they say ‘Oh that’s nothing, my friend got held up at gun point’ And you like well you know it actually was quite bad and it was the first time someone did this had happened to me and you don’t want people to come and squash your experience by telling you how bad their friend’s was. So that was something I experienced and it was horrible.” (D)

“I couldn’t really tell mom, because every time I told her she would get depressed and she would get angry and she would get sad so you know ...”(E)

“ No I was just in the beginning you know if they will tell me why you stay at home again I would get annoyed and then I would say you people haven’t experience so why don’t you leave me they say no, no, ok...and afterwards she came down and asked what happened and I said I’m not going to discuss it and she said you know I think you should get yourself a boyfriend your nerves are shattered and I thrashed her and who wants to be told that” (H)

Finally, three participants particularly mentioned the value of the opportunity to talk to others about their trauma experience.

“Man I was just able to share... It was just like chatting about it you know and then I went on my way...No nothing in particular, just spoke about it often and that is all part of your healing when you talk about things and that is what I have been doing. We have got a network of people praying for each other so I, it is precious you know that you are covered in prayer...My cell group, the church you know. I did that particular morning because I was told, I don’t know if I was in service, the Sunday after the happening and I was just able to share with them that this is what happened and I was fine” (A)

“ My girlfriend now, um we weren’t dating then but we were very close, well we still are , we were best friends and like a lot of the time little by little just spoke, like just released a little bit here a little bit there. You know she just showed love. Like just cuddle, just hold you know just something like that where I felt love ja. She supported me.” (E)

“But over the years I could talk to people then come out and talk about it and kind of healing myself...” (F)

The narratives of appreciation of initial social support, or regret over its absence, seem to link with the theory that suggests that in order to begin the meaning making process, initial distressing affect needs to be managed and that this may be achieved

through a number of avenues, including social support (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The value of sharing socially is noted by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), who state that cognitive processing is enhanced by opportunities to disclose thoughts and feelings to supportive others who can tolerate the survivor's emotional distress. Thus the emotional and practical support and opportunities for sharing offered by others in the aftermath of a violent crime, seemed to provide emotional containment which would ultimately facilitate the survivor's ability to engage in the meaning making process.

4.2.2 Changing Coping Styles

Three participants described having to give up old ways of coping that no longer worked in the aftermath of the violent crime.

“Ja I put on a brave face because I think that is what people would prefer to see. I'm very much on a... and I've got very much a strong idea about the fact that people will respond better to me if I get over it rather than harping on the same thing over and over again because I know that I have got no patience with people harping over the same thing over and over again 'get over it' so it was really I was mirroring... Well I think it was putting on a brave face really. While I did take control, I don't know necessarily if I did it in the right way, I think that it was probably too quick for me to try and make out that I was under control.” (C)

“Originally I bottled it up. Just kept it inside, if someone asked me, I'd tell them what happened but no not go and tell people you know. I did keep a diary at that stage, so I wrote down. I did a written description, I drew the event and ja I just wrote down like my feelings and everything...I don't know how much it helped because 2 weeks after the incident I went and ...I lost 12 kg in two weeks. I stopped eating, I was very, very depressed, I cried pretty much for two days straight, had no energy, nothing, didn't want to leave my room, didn't want to do anything. And then after those 2 weeks I went the other way. I gained the kilos that I lost and gained another 10 or something. So I went big swing, and then once I started to settle down (went to counselling and started

talking to girlfriend) everything started to settle down. I lost the weight that I gained so I got back to what I was, so ja” (E).

“To acknowledge that ja, ja um and the kind of things that I’ve been working through is just around that, you know recognising that, so you know I’ve always had the attitude, or would say, nothing in life is too much trouble for me, but some things are actually trouble and so owing up to that or owning that...Ja that’s that’s and its ok you know to get pissed off if you have to stand in a queue...Ja it’s ok, there’s nothing wrong with that or if somebody irritates you, let them know.” (G)

The process of giving up old assumptions and ways of coping is explained in the literature as a process of giving up primary controls or old assumptions and adopting secondary controls (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 2004). Disengaging from old assumptions allows openness to change (Linley, 2003). Thus, as described in the international literature, some of the participants in this study appeared to engage in a process of giving up primary controls or old assumptions and ways of coping which then allowed them to engage in new meaning making strategies (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

4.3 Meaning Making Strategies

Participants engaged in a number of strategies in order to develop a comprehensible, explanatory account of the violent crime. All of these strategies served the function of providing a sense of safety, control and predictability.

4.3.1 Behavioural Self-blame versus Random Chance

In attempting to develop an explanatory account for why the crime happened to them specifically, participants engaged in a process in which they blamed either their own behaviours or random chance. There were four sub-categories in which blaming behaviour was evident.

In retelling the trauma narrative, five crime survivors demonstrated engaging in a process of ‘looking for causes’. This was a process of examining behavioural factors that may have contributed to causing the crime

"I suppose it was five past seven, I phoned for take aways and it wasn't dark yet...and I sort of wove up to the main road' cos we kind of you know I could've gone more main road routes but anyway...I was alone in the car crank up the music then I was distracted I suppose..." (B)

"I wish I hadn't done because I had done it and the guy with the phone, the guy with the gun I don't think he was actually going to come after me, cause he had slowed down, just before, moments before I lobbed my bag over my shoulder and he was turning back realising that I was actually just going to get away." (C)

"I was still moving toward them. I think I think I probably threatened them. I have a double cab Toyota Highlux. I could have affectively cut them off and he just looked at me and started shooting and he shot at me." (J)

Similarly while retelling the trauma narrative three other crime survivors engaged in a process of examining the ignoring of prior warnings they could have heeded to prevent the crime from happening.

"I had a feeling this man was absolute nonsense." (A)

"And the thing was, I actually had a whole lot of premonitions, not knowing I was going to get mugged, but things that came up, thoughts which I should of listened to...I also thought at the time like he was not wearing like a bib and he felt a bit dodgy." (D)

When we came here the police said that they don't know but they most probably followed us from the video store. But I believe, that they were, cause as we were driving home down "Amy De Mist" there was a little play group or book club or something and I saw a car stopping and as I drove past it reversed so. I didn't think much of it but I think that was the car." (E)

When re-telling the violent crime event, three survivors identified specific behaviours that were in some way causal during the crime.

"But our practice is such a busy one that you know if you don't stay focussed, like is the gate closed and that kind of thing then you can land up in the problem that we had. So you know my phones were going, and this request and that request and, but I seen the gate closed and I was happy with that, not realising that it wasn't clicked." (A)

"Usually quite vigilant about making sure that nothing is going on in the road and I also noticed that none of my house mates were there because we all park just outside the garage there. So I wasn't vigilant about looking. Took my time you know, nothing bad has ever happened too me." (C)

"Cause normally if I go out to somewhere like 'X' I'll leave my handbag at home and I'll just like take out my drivers licence and a bit of money, cell phone and keys and I'll leave my bag at home so I don't look like a target you know. So, and I knew at the time like oh shit maybe I should go home put down the bag cause it's got money and my disc and everything was in the bag. Like it was quite a big bulky bag too... Instead I took my bag and walked off, and flashed it around this guy and he was a bit poor."

Eight crime survivors admitted to engaging in preventative behaviour after the crime, indicating they had made meaning that the crime could have been avoided by engaging in the correct behaviour.

"No, nothing else, just you know what must be locked must stay locked and I get very upset if they (her family) are not security conscious...There's nothing that I can say. Just become very conscious of the gate being closed, security conscious you know. You can't be careless and then ask God to help you." (A)

"I am, ja, as soon as the last customer leaves the security guard locks that door. I make him lock that door, where I wouldn't of before...Ja like at night when I come home, I'll drive around the block. Ja I've started that as a result of this...Ja especially when it comes to transport and going various places. I used to be very happy to park on the road, street parking. Now if there is a parking garage around I would rather park there...No definitely, things have

changed. I don't carry cash on me anymore. I know my banks customer care and stop card number off by heart. I have a diary here with all the relevant phone numbers that I need from my phone, in case that goes again I have a back up, a hard copy" (C)

"Current house, no distinct routines but I drive one way so I know, because there's a field like 20m from our house again, so I drive the one way so I can look onto the field so I know what's coming...At night time at a robot if there no cars I'll look, look, look if there is no cars I just go. I'm not waiting at a stop street." (E)

"I immediately had more bars put onto my windows so my house is very safe. I don't stay away from the house too long and I don't want to go anywhere at night or be late home I want to be home at a certain time and I don't go out again...That made a change in my life even now with Christmas you know they look at me with question marks you know am I ----- but I don't want to be away too long if I'm at your house too long I become jittery I want to go now...Ja definitely and not leaving until the caretaker's there in the morning" (H)

Thus most participants in this study rebuilt benevolence of the world and meaningfulness assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) or safety and control schema (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998) by blaming their own behaviour for causing the criminal assault. The use of behavioural self-blame to make the trauma comprehensible and the future more controllable is noted by Janoff-Bulman (1992). Evident in these narratives is the fact that behavioural self-blame opens the possibilities of new behaviours. This serves to comfort survivors, even if they may not realistically reduce the risk of future violent crime (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Simultaneously while blaming their own behaviour for the occurrence of the crime, most participants also blamed their involvement in the violent crime on chance. Five participants answered the question about why the crime happened to them, by blaming random chance.

“Well I think it was timing really in that instance. I don’t know if they intentionally were going out to look around to see what they could find. I think that they happened to turn a corner, I happened to be distracted and at that point in time our clouds seemed to collide...I think so, I don’t think it was a case of them actually watching me and actually calculating and taking a firm study on my hours and all that.” (C)

“I just believe that what happened happened. I was just at the wrong place at the wrong time. Unlucky really!” (E)

“I don’t always think they want to kill you I think if you’re in the wrong place at the wrong time you’re in trouble” (H)

“ I don’t know quite honestly I don’t know why it happened to me and it is not as if I timed it I just happened to be completely in the wrong place at the wrong time, it could have happened to anyone.” (J)

Blaming chance is documented in the international literature (Frazier, 2000). It appears to reflect the difficulty of rebuilding schema related to interpersonal trust and safety. Perhaps it was too difficult for some participants to think that they had been purposefully chosen as victims. Blaming chance therefore appears to be an attempt at rebuilding interpersonal trust and safety by depersonalizing the crime (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998).

4.3.2 Distinguishing Between Trustworthy and Untrustworthy Strangers

Also indicating that participants struggled to make sense of the violent nature of the attack, and the perpetrator’s willingness to use violence against them, were two strategies that survivors engaged in that appeared to be linked with re-establishing safety and control, and attempting to rebuild a degree of interpersonal trust. Four participants, in retelling the trauma narrative, engaged in a process of examining the perpetrator, in retrospect, for signs or identifying characteristics which could have served as a warning about the interpersonal violence that occurred.

“This was weird; his eyes were so he was very weird you know...

You know he was more scared than what we were at the point. So of course, you couldn't just not do what he wants you; because you know he's in that state.” (A)

“He had no feeling in his eyes. We were like this close to each other and staring at each other and there was just nothing there. Like no humanness at all...This person has no feeling and like on a different plane of existence too you. They can physically injure me and take my stuff away from me.” (D)

“ All I know is he looked very nice, he wasn't scarred, he was athletic, both of them they were these well built guys , not fat you know trim no stubble this lovely face this dark sort of north African nice face. You sort of imagine baddies going to have scars no teeth... I tried not to take it in; I tried not to look at them, do you make them have a connection with you or do you actually, because then you can identify them and they don't want that you know. I took more note of his actual beanie than of his actual clothes and JA he seemed like such a nice person... No, he wasn't intimidating; he wasn't this huge scary guy. I mean not young, young either you know...” (B)

Four participants said that since the crime, they tend to engage in a process of searching for identifying factors that will indicate whether a stranger is or is not dangerous. They now assess a stranger's trustworthiness using criteria similar to those that characterized the violent crime they experienced such as time of day, speech, and appearance. Alternatively, strangers are assessed along dimensions that are contrary to those experienced during the trauma, such as acts of kindness.

“I find that after a certain time of day if someone comes in to ask us if we've got a job for them, I will judge them on their speech, I will judge them on their appearance which people do do when they are hiring for the industry, but if they come after a certain time I will tell them to actually leave, I become very short...Ja, I do kind of get a bit hesitant. There is someone that has come in to ask for a job, and he has been in repeatedly and I have told him repeatedly no

because he actually, to me I've judged him on the base. He looks like a potential scary person..." (C)

"I never got to meet him because he wasn't on duty. He gave everything back, he could have maybe taken because I wouldn't of known the guy hadn't taken it... Ja so my faith in humanity was restored by that little guy who found my bag and phoned everyone...It's a bit of an adjustment, it like does knock your faith in humanity a bit you know. Some of the people out there aren't so bad and then you have to kind of figure out which ones you can trust." (D)

"Ja from a 'strangers' point of view I still don't let my guard down. I'm very aware, you know if they do something I'm there. But I mean once I have their trust , once they have my trust , I'm still open to meet new people, I'll still be, still talk to everyone as a friend as long as they don't give me a sign or something." (E)

The process of examining the perpetrator for distinguishing features in the retelling of the trauma narrative, and trying to assess the trustworthiness of strangers since the crime, may be linked to trying to rebuild benevolence of the world assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) and interpersonal trust schema (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998). Should the crime survivor be able to find a distinguishing characteristic in the perpetrator and strangers, it opens up the possibility of preventing future crime and trusting at least some strangers, by avoiding individuals with these distinguishing characteristics. By doing this the survivor appears to be making the meaning that only parts of the world, as opposed to the whole world, are untrustworthy.

4.3.3 Protective Behaviours During the Trauma that Prevented a Worse Outcome

Four participants identified a moment during the trauma in which engaging in a particular behaviour proved to be protective.

"I think I did keep my wits about me. If I had tried to of got into the house, that would have been a big mistake, and also I also managed to lock my car

before I moved around the side and I also had my house keys and car keys in my hand..." (C)

"I didn't want to shout at him. If you shouting at me he gets aggressive, I talk. Ok, let me explain; let me explain, can I say something. I understand your problem, let me say something, then he give me chance. This is the proof I had to give, here is my phone, here my phone...Ja, I had to give my phone because if I had to give nothing I had no proof that I'm not what he thinks I am, he would of shot me." (F)

"I don't know. When he started shooting, when the shots were fired I didn't duck down. That must have saved my life...Because it would be easy to panic and put your foot... Well, she said to me what ever thoughts were in your mind you made the right decision even if it wasn't an active decision... Ja. By stopping the car where you stopped, by not getting down, by doing everything else you did you acted correctly." (J)

Identifying behaviours engaged in that prevented the trauma from being worse may have allowed the participants to re-establish a degree of control and predictability (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998). In future, employing a similar behaviour may prevent more severe violent crime effects. Additionally, the participants also appear to be rebuilding safety schema (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998). Particular reactions in a trauma are seen to contribute towards safety.

4.3.4 Religious Protection

Four survivors used religious or cultural schema to make themselves feel they were actually protected during the traumatic event, thereby rebuilding a sense of safety in the world. Inherent in these narratives is an assumption that the violent crime was an opportunity to prove that god/the ancestors were protecting them.

"As I said I am a born again Christian. You know you start your day positive and you know that God is taking care of you because you ask Him. So I just knew His angels were all around me and I believe it...Of course, of course, I

mean I could call upon Him, I said I need your wisdom and I need your strength and He was there...I have grown up in a Christian home you know, I have lots of ministers come to the home you know in a family situation. We grew up knowing that God is our strength and our source...I always say to the children "You do your best and God does the rest." (A)

" Before this one before this one that night I told myself I was going to die it was my night but my ancestors and God looked after me, ja you know... What I do, sometimes my kid, when I'm off, sometimes you know or when sometimes he screams for his ma. I go to room, lock myself in there, keep the radio quiet and just pray, pray and after praying talk to my ancestors and just...Ja, I just thank them. I put what I believe in they are there with God. I always talk to God and talk to them because they are all looking and protecting me." (F)

"He came right into my house and that with him again I thought I experienced the power of prayer you know where God said I will protect you before that it didn't make sense to me...Ja I just said God please help me his going to murder me and I ran and there again I experienced you know the power of prayer really because before that I prayer was ok I pray fine but there he brought the guy into my house and he showed me what that he will answer my prayer ..." (H)

The above narratives reflect a collaborative style religious schema in which there is an active exchange between the individual and god (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

Participants ask for help from god and the ancestors, and in return they are protected. As suggested by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995), this seems to help survivors manage anxiety about being in an unsafe and uncontrollable world. Evident in themes of having their prayers answered during the trauma is the "interpretative control" offered by these survivor's religious beliefs (Rothbaum et al., 1982, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, p.74). Having been protected by god or the ancestors, survivors may be able to interpret the violent crime as an event that happened in order to test their faith and prove god or the ancestors care for them. The violent crime therefore becomes comprehensible.

4.3.5 Comparisons as Protective

A number of survivors in this sample made meaning of the event by making comparisons. There were two types of comparison that were used. Four participants made external comparisons to hypothetical worse outcomes.

“If I had got held up at gunpoint it would probably take me a bit longer to recover. It wasn’t such a bad one you know...Like I said it could have been worse than it was ...” (D)

“Ja, I mean I was so lucky they were not tsotsis, they would of killed me. They would of taken my phone everything you know, but they were security guys at the end of the day because they always look after the property you know but they would have had my Nokia. They wouldn’t think twice you know what I mean. That was my luck. I was lucky that was my luck, I was so lucky. I was really so lucky.” (F)

“Exactly, could of actually, if I , as you know, if he was nervous, actually had his finger on the trigger, he cocked the gun and he might have squeezed the gun without knowing then it could have all turned out different. Very different.” (G)

These participants appeared to have rebuilt benevolence of the world assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) and fulfilled the needs for safety and control (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998), through a process of making themselves feel safe and protected by luck.

Three participants used a type of internal comparison when they reported a decrease of posttraumatic symptoms over time.

“I have calmed down now, I am much better. For a few weeks/months afterwards I was like nervous.” (D)

“That was one of the things they tell me in the counselling sessions at the police station was that in a months time you’re going to be forgetting to lock

the windows, I mean the door and you know all of that and you know all of that...Let me say I haven't noticed which means that obviously, that I guess it's true, I can't dispute that. The fact I haven't noticed means I've become less conscious of it you know" (G)

"I wouldn't know if I have I only know I don't noises don't upset me any more you know the gates that bang doesn't bother me anymore I hear it and I don't hear it and I do move about..." (H)

Making meaning of shattered self-worth assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) and rebuilding a sense of personal power and trust in the self (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998), appears to have been achieved by comparing early and later posttraumatic symptoms, which allowed participants to arrive at the conclusion that they were regaining control over themselves.

4.3.6 Blaming Social and Economic Problems

Participants appeared to explain the violent crime they experienced by blaming contextual problems. Four participants blamed the violent crime on the perpetrator, but they tended to relate the 'bad' characteristics of the perpetrator to a broader social problem. Thus characteristics such as laziness, cowardliness and selfishness were blamed on social factors such as finding it hard to get a job as a refugee, the presence of guns in society and being part of a gang.

" I think people are so incredibly lazy and especially in South Africa, we have got a lot of refugees, a hell of a lot of refugees and they, just so because they so lazy they think of an easier way to get a job." Later the participant added, "I know because, especially in our company we won't hire somebody who doesn't have a valid work permit, and if you're a refugee chance is you won't have a valid work permit so it is difficult to find jobs." (C)

"... because to me when you take a gun to shoot it is cowardness to me. He is a coward to me because in the past the gun was so scarce. We used to fight with fists and knives or sticks. To me at that time you were not a coward if you fight with your fists. But today if someone takes a gun and say he is a hero, he

is not a hero to me, he is a coward because that person had no chance to fight with you, he just shot him like that. To me those people who have guns are cowards.” (F)

“... there’s been a lot of cracks on how these gangs operate and what they (gang members) do and how they live they not full filling any function other than selfish.” (J)

Seven participants blamed economic hardship as the cause of the violence they had experienced.

“Man you know when you think of the situation in the country and the unemployment, man you know my heart bleeds when I see these guys standing around. These are priests in their homes. My Bible teaches the man is the priest, he’s the head of the home and to have that where they are not able to provide for their families, I think that alone is so bad...I would think so, that is what I thought you know and maybe not all of them but the majority of them because of unemployment. What would we do if we don’t have work?” (A)

“There are barely enough jobs for people from South Africa so what else is there to do, turn to crime, break into cars and try and steal money.” (C)

“That is a tricky one for me. I have always thought I’ve got lots of money and they don’t and you don’t know what is going on, they may have children to feed...The crime isn’t really the problem, It’s the matter about jobs. If they had jobs they would have money and no need to steal. It would reduce crime like quite a lot.” (D)

“Ja well the very nature of my work I think is focussed or premised on one of the facts that when people have no other option they turn to crime.” (G)

Seven participants saw social problems such as addiction and gangs as additional causes of violent crime.

“Maybe these guys are ok, they are just out to hurt and that you know because of the greed they will do the things that they do or maybe because of the abuse or substance abuse. Because of the addiction they are doing it...” (A)

“ But afterwards someone said to me he may have been a drug addict, maybe he like really needed some more money to get some heroin. You don't know what is going on in his life.” (D)

“...gang initiations um, drug abuse or it's their job or. There's quite a few things that could influence it. I know that a lot of gang initiations are done through hi jacking and shootings...” (E)

The strategy of blaming contextual issues such as poverty and social problems for violent crime is not well documented in the literature. Blaming context may enable a degree of safety, control and predictability (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998) to be re-established, as contextual factors are theoretically changeable. Blaming context for the violent crime may reflect a difficulty participants had in rebuilding interpersonal trust schema (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, cited in Foa & Rothbaum, 1998) following the interpersonal violence of the crime. As documented in the literature, trauma involving violations of interpersonal trust are hardest to overcome (Breslau, 1998; Herman, 2001; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Kessler et al., 1995). It may have been emotionally easier to focus on external contextual issues and rebuild a degree of external safety, control and predictability, than grapple with the emotionally difficult interpersonal factors that may have caused the interpersonal violence and attempt to rebuild interpersonal trust and safety.

In conclusion, as documented in the international literature, participants in this study made use of behavioural self-blame, blaming random chance, religious schema and comparisons to restore safety, control and predictability schema and to make the violent crime comprehensible. A degree of interpersonal trust was re-established by participants in this research through identifying perpetrator characteristics that could be used to distinguish trustworthy from untrustworthy strangers. This analysis yielded undocumented ways in which participants managed to re-establish possibilities for safety, control and predictability, such as identifying protective behaviours that

prevented worse outcomes during the crime and by blaming contextual factors such as poverty or social maladies that were theoretically changeable. Next areas that participants struggled to make comprehensible are discussed.

4.4 Grappling with Meaning

There were three areas that participants in this study continued to find difficult to make comprehensible. Three participants were grappling with a context and social world that minimizes the severity of the violent crime the participant had experienced.

Having complained about others minimizing the trauma she had experienced, D stated, *"...but um I mean it wasn't that bad what he did to me...and I don't really blame them (the police for not coming to the scene) because it was just a mugging..."* (D)

"Ja everyone says ah you so lucky he didn't touch you, you so lucky, you so lucky! I don't feel lucky..." (B)

"Why am I feeling like you know there something been done wrong to me, look what happened to her, to him and I actually then as I say this happened almost immediately you know afterwards that I started discounting you know, my event or my thing as you know being a non event...I became embarrassed talking about it because people wanted to know about it, not that wasn't such a big deal, not that kind of so don't make a big thing of it because it really wasn't a big thing, um ja..." (G)

Five participants struggled to make meaning of continuing to live in such a context.

"...you live in this country and it's always I know someone that this has happened to...Um we had a security line we've still got the security line you know put up an electric fence what's that going to help the gate was open um put more lights outside put a camera outside but is that really going to make a difference and I think that was the thing that I mean what else can we do to make it safer I mean there's a street light right there um so what's it gonna stop it from happening again 'cos we haven't changed you know what else can

we do...Ja you know then it brought up the whole um emigration and that was if we were leaving...Ja so we'd been talking about it before and since then how close does it need to get"(B)

"I have been reading a lot more about crime in the papers and there definitely is an increase at the moment...I mean in a way it is actually just a matter of time till something happens to you so, it never really, but like a few little things have happened to me but that was the first time I got mugged so... There is just so much going on in this country...Ja I spend quite a lot of time thinking about that, and I re-evaluate because I am always pro S.A. and when I hear people leave the country because of the crime, then I thought to myself well mine wasn't that bad but if he had stabbed my friend in front of me that would of made me want to leave the country...that was what I was saying, stay in the country and be part of the solution, work , create money and jobs sort of like oh I'm not running away. But like I said I have got to revalue that because if someone shot my Mom, then I don't know if I could stay in the country..." (D)

"... in those days (Apartheid) it was a struggle but I could sit in front of Woodstock town hall and wait for a bus it was a struggle but today I can't go to the shop at six o clock." (H)

"I had to think about it I um probably the only issues I had directly afterwards the lack of this countries ability to curb the heists and the violent stuff you have on one every single day. Every single day you open the newspaper you hear about a cash heist article, but no, directly no...Frustration more than anything else, ja. Why haven't the system been able to deal with this?" (J)

Five participants admitted to struggling with making sense of the interpersonal violence aspect of the crime they had experienced.

"...but violent crime I just can't comprehend why you need to like slay the whole family and then steal a TV...but I can't forgive a violent crime, there are easier ways to get money. I mean like in theory I don't really mind that

much if someone steals something from me, just don't hurt me or my family.”
(D)

“Ja, ja to me if you want my cell phone, to me here have it. You don't have to kill me. My life is worth more. I can buy another one...Yes; ja people don't really worry about life. Ja I mean I have got neighbour, a boy, his father he died of violence, his father in squatter camp area. He was youngest boy then. He grow up now, he's old man. His mom she put him in white school. I mean that's good, that's good his getting good education, but he had bad friends to teach him, you know what he did, he was shot in another section and then he stayed in hospital two months and then he was fine and then he had a gun also. He saw the police van, he shot at police, but they arrested him. He is in prison now, what for? What for? Why?” (F)

“...there's a cross over between stealing to help yourself survive and hurting another person to do that because I don't believe you have to kill somebody to survive or hurt somebody to survive...At least I can't understand their mentality behind hurting other people ...” (I)

Thus, while participants used contextual factors to explain why perpetrators resorted to crime, they could not explain why perpetrators resort to violence. The struggle with the interpersonal violence aspect of trauma is well documented in the international literature (Breslau, 1998; Herman, 2001; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Kessler et al., 1995). The struggles with minimizing crime and with living in South Africa may be struggles specific to the South African context in which participants live and are discussed further in the conclusion chapter. Below areas of PTG identified by participants are discussed.

4.5 Identifying Significance/Benefit or PTG

Not all participants admitted to finding significance or experiencing posttraumatic growth following the violent crime. The PTG or significance expressed by participants fell under three of the five categories postulated by Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004) in their five factor Posttraumatic Growth Inventory.

4.5.1 Finding versus Not Finding Benefit

Three participants, at some point in their narratives, articulated finding no benefit from the experience or indicated that negative consequences outweighed any positives.

"No really no because many people don't they really ...feel like it shouldn't happen..."

How would you know when you've recovered?

I don't know if I'll ever be I mean I don't know if I lived in a different house and had a garage door maybe you know what I mean it's just...

So you do make adjustments?

Conscious ones you know but I don't think it ever leaves you well it hasn't yet maybe I mean it obviously gets easier with time I mean I mean I can do it on my own now in the dark but I don't know if I'll ever be over it" (B).

"I wouldn't know if I'm over it I don't think I'll really get over it"

You don't think you ever will?

"I don't think so how do you trust people again" (H)

"I suppose I didn't really learn anything that helpful." (I)

However, all but one of these participants during the course of the interview did allude to some positive factors that they had drawn from the experience. For instance, 'B' had valued the social support she received:

"...there were a lot of kindness and that from unexpected places you know like at the bank even you know when I didn't have papers or whatever and they were very understanding and they sort of gave leeway there and the traffic department when I wanted to trace the numbers.....you know you saw a different side to people and very understanding" (B)

'H' mentioned the strengthening of religious schema:

“He came right into my house and that with him again I thought I experienced the power of prayer you know where God said I will protect you before that it didn’t make sense to me...Ja I just said God please help me his going to murder me and I ran and there again I experienced you know the power of prayer really because before that I prayer was ok I pray fine but there he brought the guy into my house and he showed me what that he will answer my prayer ...” (H)

Three participants asserted outright that the experience had been more beneficial than detrimental.

“I feel back to normal, but I think a better normal if I can say such a thing. I think I am more happy with my life than I was.” (E)

“To me the bad stuff taught me a lot and then I gained a lot...” (F)

“No I don’t that’s the nice thing I haven’t I haven’t walked away with anything less, if anything I’ve walked away positive.” (J)

Despite asserting they experienced more benefits than negative consequences all these participants continued to struggle with issues such as feelings of lack of safety. Thus most participants experienced a mixture of positive benefits and negative symptoms (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003).

4.5.2 Changed Relationships

Seven survivors identified positive changes in their relationships with others since the incident.

“I’m a lot closer to my girlfriend...I just you know because I am standing up for myself more, because people aren’t walking over me as much I am more free. I am living more my life than the other person’s life you know what I mean” (E)

“Now I’ve got one, I’ve got a girlfriend now who I’m going out with in a serious relationship, of which that’s one of the reasons I want to live more...Too much. My family they are my friends, they’re everything to me you know. When I’m off on weekends I always drive around. Take my son, put him in the car, drive around. I don’t have to go out, just drive around to make him happy. Drive around, then park the car inside the yard; buy him anything he wants to buy...I’ve got sons to live for. They are looking up to me. Every time I come home from work they want to play with me and you know I’ve got these two boys, they’re looking up to me and I want to do stuff for them my father couldn’t do for me you know. So I must always, not for me but for them.” (F)

“I gave myself, been more appreciative of you know the company or the relationships.” (G)

“Like that just little things but just made me appreciate and people around me and my life and my situation and that I do have a job I do have health and I do have family.” (J)

“Just shifting my paradigm because you can’t judge other people because you don’t know when they decided to leave the country what actually happened why they left. To realize that I need to change my view and be more lenient” (D)

These statements fall under the ‘relating to others’ factor in Tedeschi and Calhoun's (2004) PTG inventory. In particular, the participants expressed improved relationships with family members and increased compassion.

4.5.3 Appreciation of Life

Four participants found a new appreciation of their own lives since experiencing the violent crime.

“Ja, what I notice now you know after the event, I notice that life you can be here now but you can be gone now. So know, each and every time you got to live for now. You don’t know what’s going to happen next...But now what

happened this dying people in front of me , being close to me, even people I don't know, it makes me more value life, more than I used to you know. So it kind of changed me a lot." (F)

"No, I, I think right from the moment after I knew that they had left that I was ok I must really say we became more appreciative of my life...So its, I guess in a way, you know, as I say, all of that has started opening you know my eyes to that when I speak of the gift of life, um. I, I, you know, can't say that now with the same conviction and passion that I felt at the time, but I definitely, you know, I think there is still something that I am conscious of all that time that its meaningful." (G)

"So ja it hasn't what it did do was focus my kind of complacency in realizing that life is short can go very quickly." (J)

As documented in the discussion of the PTG Inventory, these statements show how individuals may begin to appreciate there own lives after a traumatic event. This appreciation may lead to a changed philosophy of life (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 2004).

4.5.4 New Philosophy of Life

Six individuals explained that they had adopted a new and more helpful philosophy of life or that the incident had reinforced a philosophy of life that they had tended to forget but which had worked for them.

"I think, like I used to go to church and stuff, but the one thing I could never really like bring back ok if you really believe in this God why would this stuff ever happen to you, so I don't know, it's a tricky one in terms of spirituality. Like if you, ok like I kind of believe you create your own reality, and because I've been so scared something will happen to me for so long it was bound to happen eventually...Ja, it's obviously if you sit and think someone is going to mug me eventually it will. But there's a fine line between being careful so that you don't like invite crime and like stressing, over stressing about it. I've learnt that maybe I don't over stress about it because you get someone like 'D'

who just like ...wafts...through life and she is too blasé about it and I thought I was too stressed about it but obviously there is a middle ground.” (D)

“To acknowledge that ja, ja um and the kind of things that I’ve been working through is just around that you know recognising that so you know I’ve always had the attitude or would say nothing in life is too much trouble for me, but some things are actually trouble and so owning up to that or owning that... Ja, ja , but so as I say starting part of my ah break through now so now things that really matter to me and so acknowledging that and then making sure that I take care of myself you know and actually make the space for that and not just you know, as you say soldier on but to actually, to give myself the space, the time you know, everything else that I need to do that so in going for these sessions I mean that was just part of it so I started in any case it’s actually to my benefit doing a little bit more exercise. So I started taking that as well, you know, just walking, cycling, and starting to go to yoga classes, just doing the breathing and relaxing you know...Ja, basically just taking better care of myself. Trying to deal with the stress you know...” (G)

“Um, well it kind of like reinforced, reinforced in what I do believe in that make the most of life and don’t take it for granted and it surprises me that it didn’t make me reluctant to be in South Africa, I mean I’m SA through and through. I mean I’ll never leave just post, post incident I just began appreciating it more you know watching the sun go down I mean it could have been my last, like that just little things but just made me appreciate and people around me and my life and my situation and that I do have a job I do have health and I do have family and I absolutely and ...So its crazy to think that what most people would think as pretty negative experience can bring that out in me.” (J)

Evident in the above statements about a changed philosophy of life are the tendencies to change things that were not working, to establish new interests and to engage in existential issues. These are documented under the Philosophy of Life factor of the PTG inventory (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Also evident in these statements is the integration of the traumatic event into the life

narrative (Sewell & Williams, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). 'D' has found a middle path between complacency and over-worrying about crime that she views as protecting her from future crime. The trauma was also a turning point in 'G's life narrative, resulting in him taking better care of himself. The traumatic event caused 'J' to remember what was important in life, including patriotism.

4.5.5 Loss of Naivety and Gaining Maturity

Four participants believed that the violent crime had resulted in them having grown up or lost naivety.

"No not really, just that you know you are very, very conscious that this is reality and this is life and this is the age we are living in you know?" (A)

"It has definitely made me more aware, it really has. I was beginning to take it for granted that I was one of the untouchables you know, ah I hope it never happens to me you know, one of those. I think you fall into your pattern so easily and so quickly you forget that actually there are time when your pattern won't be as smooth as you think it must be there is a kink in the road and it will happen don't forget that. So JA I think it has very definitely made me very much more conscious especially." (C)

"Ja I suppose in a way I was living in a kind of a bubble and kind of in the back of my mind it hasn't happened to me yet..." (D)

"I mean I've grown. I previous like in May, like in June after that event I've grown up... Like I've grown up inside also, thinking and everything." (F)

These statements appear to indicate the acquisition of wisdom, postulated by Linley (2003) and Tedeschi (1999) to be the greatest benefit from trauma. Evident in these statements are new types of knowledge about the human condition, and related knowledge about means of planning, managing and understanding how to live life.

Thus as suggested by the literature, PTG in the participants of this study did not occur in the absence of negative symptoms. The significances or PTG areas identified by

participants in this study corresponded to the areas of PTG identified in the international literature.

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that, as documented in the international literature, schema related to safety, control, predictability, interpersonal trust and self-worth are disrupted in this sample of South African violent crime survivors. Participants made use of social support and changed old coping styles, as documented in the international literature, to facilitate engaging in meaning making strategies. Survivors of violent crime engaged in meaning making strategies cited in the international literature such as blaming their own behaviour, blaming random chance, distinguishing between trustworthy and untrustworthy strangers, using religious protection and making comparisons. As documented in the international literature, participants continued to struggle with the interpersonal violence aspect of the crime. Participants presented with a mixture of PTG and negative posttraumatic symptomology. Areas of PTG identified by survivors included changed relationships, appreciating life, a new philosophy of life and a loss of naivety and a gain in maturity. The results of this study revealed a number of context specific findings. These findings include a distressing change in racial schema after the violent crime. New meaning making strategies included identifying protective behaviours that prevented a worse outcome during the crime and blaming social and economic problems. Participants expressed a continued struggle with a context that minimized violent crime, and with living in the South African context. The final chapter will integrate and interpret the main findings of this study. Reflexivity issues, limitations and recommendations will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter the results of the study are integrated and discussed in two sections: results that are documented in the international literature and context specific findings. Issues of reflexivity that may have impacted on the results are then presented. Finally, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research and clinical work are considered.

5.1 Summary and Discussion of Main Findings

In summary, the results of this study verified that some of the international literature on meaning making strategies and PTG are applicable to survivors of violent crime in the South African context. However, a number of shattered assumptions, meaning making strategies and struggles with meaning are not documented in the international literature and are possibly specific to the South African context.

5.1.1 Findings Documented in the International Literature

This exploratory and descriptive study of meaning making and PTG amongst survivors of violent crime in South Africa appears to indicate that much of the international theory is applicable in the South African context. As in other populations, the survivors of violent crime in this sample experienced challenges to assumptions about safety, control, predictability, interpersonal trust and self-worth (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

As suggested by international theorists, social support was an important mitigating factor to the meaning making process (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2004; Lechner & Antoni, 2004). Social support included, firstly, the use of practical and emotional social support to manage and contain initial distressing affect (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Secondly, participants valued the opportunities to talk about thoughts and feelings not only in order to manage emotional distress (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) but as a process that allowed validation and alternate construction of experience (Harvey, Barnett & Overstreet, 2004; Neimeyer, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2006).

As suggested by the international literature, survivors engaged in a process of giving up old assumptions about ways of coping in order to embrace the process of creating new meanings. Primary controls were dropped in favour of being open to new meaning making in order to attain new secondary controls and rebuild higher order schema (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; 2004).

The survivors of violent crime in this study engaged in a number of meaning making strategies in order to develop a comprehensible, explanatory account. Their strategies of blaming their own behaviour (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), blaming random chance (Frazier, 2000), distinguishing between trustworthy and untrustworthy strangers (Herman, 2001), using religious protection (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995) and making comparisons (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995) are mentioned in the international literature also.

As postulated by Janoff-Bulman (1992), participants re-worked schema through re-interpretation and re-definition. Some meaning making strategies reflected meaning making through assimilation (Linley & Joseph, 2005) and involved minimizing the difference between pre-trauma assumptions and post-trauma assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). For instance, survivors are likely to have assumed they were relatively safe in the world prior to the crime (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). By engaging in behavioural self-blame, distinguishing between trustworthy and untrustworthy strangers, and seeing the surviving of violent crime as having occurred to demonstrate that god/the ancestors care, survivors are rebuilding safety and control schema by reinterpreting the world as essentially predictable and controllable if the correct action is engaged in. By blaming random chance, comparing and interpreting the crime as not as bad as it could have been, and interpreting themselves as protected during the crime by god/ancestors, survivors redefined themselves as essentially safe and somehow protected from the worst in the world. It is likely that symptoms following the trauma made survivors feel out of control of themselves. By comparing early symptoms with a decrease in symptoms over time, the survivor is making the meaning that they are regaining back control over the self, which is likely to rebuild self-worth (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). As documented in the international literature, participants struggled most to rebuild interpersonal trust (Breslau, 1998; Herman, 2001; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Kessler et al., 1995). As it was difficult to completely assimilate all

aspects of breeches in interpersonal trust, particularly the interpersonal violence aspect of the crime, participants had to create new schema to accommodate this trauma information.

Evident in some of the themes in this study, and as described in the international literature, participants in this study did seem to engage in cognitive processing or ruminating (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). While retelling the story of the violent crime experience or answering interview questions, participants processed the role of their own behaviour in the crime by searching retrospectively for behavioural causes of the crime and identifying prior warnings they did not heed that may have prevented the crime. They also tried to identify warning characteristics in the perpetrator. Thus, as postulated by meaning making theorists, survivors seemed to be purposefully examining the event in an attempt to reinforce, or search for further, comprehensibility (Martin & Tesser, 1989, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Tait & Silver, 1989). Although it is impossible to verify, the rumination engaged in at these times seemed adaptive rather than depressogenic (Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2005). Most participants did not try to avoid trauma material, and ruminations about the role of behaviour or interpersonal trust are indications of rumination centred on an “instrumental theme”, one of the factors indicative of adaptive rumination (Martin & Tesser, 1996, cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 11).

Although some participants in this study expressed experiencing mainly benefit, and others no or little benefit, following the violent crime experience, most participants displayed a mixture of benefits and negative posttraumatic symptomology. A mixture of benefit and negative outcomes is noted in the writings of international researchers who suggest that negative and positive symptoms usually exist together following a trauma Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Morris et al., 2005, Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Although no clear understanding of the relationship between positive and negative symptoms was evident in participants’ narratives, the fact that many participants, in retelling the violent crime experience, were engaging in rumination about the event seems to lend some support to the hypothesis that negative cognitive and emotional reminders of the event may facilitate ongoing cognitive processing (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Without minimizing the painful and negative impact of trauma (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Lechner & Antoni, 2004; Standton & Low, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), it did seem that most participants in this study experienced PTG in some but not all areas of life (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003). The areas of PTG identified by participants in this study had all been documented in Calhoun and Tedeschi's (2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) five factor Posttraumatic Growth Inventory.

Some participants had experienced a new appreciation of life and/or a changed philosophy of life which also included a tendency for some participants to establish new interests and change what was not working in their lives (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi, 1999; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). As suggested by the international literature, it was evident in narratives of changed philosophy of life that the trauma had been integrated into the life narrative of these survivors. In the narratives, the trauma metaconstructions (meaning of the traumatic event) appear to have shattered past metaconstructions (core assumption), as suggested by Sewell and Williams (2003). The trauma then became a turning point that gave meaning and a plan to the future life for many participants (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995), as was evident in the changed philosophy of life category.

Survivors reported positive changes in close personal relationships and particularly increased empathy (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2003; Tedeschi, 1999; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Finally, survivors experienced a loss of naivety or the acquisition of maturity which appear to fit into the wisdom category postulated by Linley (2003) and Tedeschi (1999). In particular, survivors seem to have been referring to a new and more realistic knowledge about the human condition (Baltes & Staudiger, 2000, cited in Linley, 2003). Thus, no new areas of PTG were identified in this study. Findings that appeared to be specific to the South African context are discussed in the following section.

5.1.2 Context Specific Findings

There were a number of findings in this study that appeared context specific. A new meaning making strategy used by survivors in this study was to identify a moment during the crime in which behaviour had been protective and prevented the effects of the violent crime from being worse. This category appears to be similar, but not

identical, to the internationally documented strategies of behavioural blame and comparing to worse outcomes (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). This strategy minimized the difference between trauma schema and pre-trauma schema and allowed the trauma to be assimilated into existing schema about safety and control. Survivors could reinterpret themselves as saved and protected from the worst in the world by a protective behaviour. However, as postulated by Janoff-Bulman (1992) and Herman (2001) and as evident in prevalence studies of PTSD (Breslau, 1998; Kessler et al., 1995), in this study violent crime survivors struggled most to make meaning of the breach of interpersonal trust caused by the violent crime experience. Survivors struggled to assimilate this breach into existing interpersonal trust schema and instead attempted to build new schema in an attempt to accommodate (Linley & Joseph, 2005) the shattering of interpersonal trust.

When trying to understand why a person would commit a violent crime, it appeared that it was too difficult for most participants in this study to believe that the perpetrator was inherently bad. Thus, where participants blamed perpetrators characters, they tended to link these flaws to social maladies. Also it appeared too difficult for survivors to assume they had been personally targeted and they tended to deal with the interpersonal aspect of the violent crime by depersonalizing it and blaming their involvement on random chance (Frazier, 2000). Thus participants seemed to focus mostly on contextual issues when trying to make sense of why a person would commit a violent crime. A new schema (Linley & Joseph, 2005) was created to make the crime meaningful through blaming contextual issues that are theoretically changeable, and attributing personal involvement in the violent crime to random chance. This strategy opens the possibility that safety and control schema and a degree of interpersonal trust may be re-established. It seems to suggest that if poverty and social problems could be eradicated, perpetrators who are not inherently bad, but merely victims of context, would stop committing crime.

A tendency for participants to blame context in this study may also relate to cultural schema in a collectivist society. Individuals in collective cultures are more aware of context than individuals from individualist cultures (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Gardner, Gabriel & Lee, 1999; Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura & Larsen, 2003). In contrast to western individualist notions, many South Africans understand themselves

as part of a collective, rather than individualistically. This makes it more likely that societal factors, rather than individual factors, would be seen as the cause of violent crime.

Participants in this study also struggled to make meaning of a context that minimized violent crime. This struggle is understandable when the disparity between the documented effects of violence on individuals is examined in relation to a societal denial about the severity of the impact of violent crime. As explained in the literature review, survivors of violence are known to have a high rate of PTS symptoms (Boney, McCoy & Finkelhor, 1995, cited in MacMillan, 2001; Tedeschi, 1999; Waller & Okihiro, 1982, cited in Waller, 1989). Again as discussed in the literature review, the study of trauma is always intimately connected with the cultural, social and political conditions of the time (Herman, 2001; Van der Kolk, Weisaeth & Van der Hart, 1996). A large part of the South African population experienced severe political violence under Apartheid, which appears to have resulted in the normalization of a culture of violence and human rights violations in South African society (Louw, 1997). There is thus a disparity between the symptoms victims of violent crime experience and the attitude of society towards violent crime survivors. This disparity is a possible explanation for the conflict expressed by some participants in relation to the minimizing of their experience by others. As indicated in the narratives, survivors were angry and confused at a context that minimized violent crime, particularly when they must have been experiencing a myriad of negative consequences. This anger and confusion, and possibly shame, at feeling what is not sanctioned by society, also may have increased a tendency to blame contextual issues for crime.

The problem with blaming context and random chance is that, although they can be used to explain the occurrence of crime, they do not explain the violence that characterized the crimes experienced by these South African participants. This violence is less salient in crime activities in countries such as India which also have severe economic and social problems. Remedying economic and social problems may lessen crime, but possibly won't make any difference to the perpetuation of violence. Thus the above accommodating schema did not completely make violence comprehensible and participants continue to struggle with the interpersonal violence aspect of the crime.

There are two possible explanations for the difficulty in dealing with the interpersonal violence of the crime and thus with rebuilding interpersonal trust. As documented by international theorists such as Janoff-Bulman (1992), interpersonal violence severely shatters assumptions about the benevolence of the world and interpersonal trust and results in the most negative assumptions about the self and world. As postulated by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) and Tedeschi (1999), such meaning making and PTG may require years of processing. As previously mentioned, other victims of interpersonal violence such as rape victims take years to make meaning of the rape as they tend to avoid thinking about trauma material (Burt & Katz, 1987, cited in Tedeschi, 1999). Victims of violent crime may experience a similar destruction of interpersonal trust schema, have a tendency to avoid the interpersonal violent aspect of the experience, and thus require a longer time period to rebuild related schema compared to other general control and predictability schema.

However, there may also be context specific factors in South Africa that make it additionally hard to engage in making meaning of interpersonal violence. In order to make sense of interpersonal violence it seems plausible that survivors would engage in examining the role of the self and of the perpetrator. Frazier (2000) documents that it is usual for survivors of rape to engage in characterological and perpetrator blame. As mentioned, this was difficult for survivors in this study to do possibly because of changes in racial schema following the crime. Participants in this study displayed a previously undocumented challenge to self-worth assumptions when racial schemas were disrupted following the crime. The international literature notes that it is not uncommon for survivors to judge strangers by characteristics that are similar to those of the perpetrator (Herman, 2001). However, in the South African context, where participants judged strangers on the basis of the race of the perpetrator after the crime, it appeared to significantly impact on self-worth assumptions. It is possible that following a history of Apartheid, participants who had taken part in the struggle or grown up in an integrated country had developed powerful and hard won pre-trauma schema (McMillan, 2004) that hold that individuals should not be judged by race. Morris (2005) states that cultural factors may account for differences in meanings assigned to events. The shame and confusion expressed in the participants' narratives about this new racist schema may indicate that the participants held an assumption that those who judge according to race are bad people.

McMillan (2004) and Pals and Adams (2004) note that culture provides guidelines for what makes up a tellable narrative. Other participants may have experienced similar new racist beliefs and shame which they were unable to voice. As Attig (2003) notes, schema are not always conscious and cognitive but are evident in automatic reactions to events. It is possible that fear about judging the perpetrator on the characteristic of race prohibited participants from examining and possibly assigning blame to the perpetrator (Frazier, 2000; Tedeschi, 1999). Similarly, guilt and shame about discovering that the self had racist tendencies seems to have functioned protectively and stopped participants from engaging in the often harmful strategy of characterological self-blame (Frazier, 2000; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Instead, many survivors in this study appeared to focus on 'politically correct' contextual factors, engaged in blaming random chance (Frazier, 2000) or blamed their own behaviour (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Thus survivors seem to have chosen to avoid examining individual factors within themselves or in the perpetrator which would cause feelings of guilt or anger, but in this way also may have avoided making meaning of interpersonal violence.

A possible explanation for some participants' ongoing struggle with living in South Africa may be related to a fear that safety, control and interpersonal trust could not be rebuilt in such a context. Having blamed social and economic factors for violent crime, participants logically may have had to question the meaning of continuing to live in such a context. In the South African context there are daily reports of ongoing high crime statistics (CIAC) and ineffectual policing and judicial systems (Louw, 1997). Additionally, participants struggled with a context that minimized the impact of the violent crime they had experienced and a context specific struggle with racist schema that possibly made it difficult to resolve interpersonal trust violations. The struggle with living in South Africa may reflect a fear amongst participants that safety, control and interpersonal trust would be impossible to achieve in this context. This may explain why some participants even considering leaving the country. In conclusion, while much of the international literature on meaning making is applicable to survivors of violent crime in this South African sample, the context specific findings include distress at new racist schema following the trauma, a tendency to blame context because of the difficulty examining and making sense of interpersonal violence, the struggle with a context that minimizes the impact of

violent crime, and struggling to continue living in this context. Next factors related to the researcher, that may have impacted on the results, are explained.

5.2 Reflexivity

As stated by Finlay (2002) and Greenbank (2002), it is important to examine the effect of the researcher's subjectivity on the research process. As Arvay (2003) notes:

It is in the activity of telling that narrative meaning is constructed. It is in the telling that the story is rendered meaningful to the participant and the researcher...Each telling will differ; each reading will render new interpretations...The implications for research are that our findings will always be contingent, given the ever-changing nature of narrative construction. (p.217)

In this study, the researcher's subjectivity may in part have accounted for some of the lack of meaning articulated in relation to violent crime. The researcher in this study was a white woman. There were many participants of colour who in talking to a white researcher may have found it difficult to voice certain explanations for interpersonal violence. For instance, as previously stated, the literature on violence indicates that Apartheid and political violence may have resulted in a 'culture of violence' (Louw, 1997). One participant explained the deep anger and difficulty she had with forgiving white South Africans for the past. Under such circumstances, it may have been difficult for such participants to articulate explanations of violence related to apartheid. Similarly, it may have been difficult for many participants to blame the New South Africa's policing or judicial systems (Louw, 1997) when talking to a white woman.

5.3 Limitations

As previously mentioned, because of the qualitative case study approach used in this study, volunteer sampling and the use of participants who had already been through some counselling, the above findings are pertinent for thickening meaning making theory but cannot be generalized to the South African population of violent crime survivors, without further confirmatory research. Although this study did reflect that most participants had a mixture of positive benefits and negative symptoms following the violent crime, there was no category explaining the relationship, if any, between

the two. Nor did the findings categorically indicate that the negative symptoms were related to rumination or illusory coping. Race representation in the sample was also a limitation. Race was a prominent theme amongst some participants and alternative meanings may have emerged from a sample which was not predominantly white. In particular, black men and women were under-represented in this sample.

5.4 Recommendations

The explanations offered for the racial schema contributing towards decreasing self-worth assumptions, and the explanations for a tendency to blame contextual factors for crime, require further investigation and clarification. It may be beneficial to carry out similar research where the researcher is not a white woman, to see if meaning attributions differ. Finally, the relationship between meaning making, PTG and negative posttraumatic symptomology requires further investigation in the South African context. An increased sample size would have been preferable, with a group of asymptomatic and a group of symptomatic participants. This would have enabled the relationship between negative symptoms and meaning making, to be investigated. Questions would need to be included in the interview schedule to investigate illusory thinking and avoidance of trauma material.

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be made for clinical practice with crime survivors. Firstly, the study showed that, as with survivors of other trauma, survivors of violent crime experience disturbances in perceptions of safety, control and predictability, interpersonal trust and self-worth. Normalizing these distressing after-effects of violent crime may be helpful, particularly in a context that tends to minimize the gravity and impact of violent crime. As context specific findings indicated, it may be necessary to normalize feelings of distress about the tendency for society and others to minimize violent crime. As evident in the participants' appreciation of the initial importance of the containment offered by social support, it may be most appropriate at first for therapists to focus on containment of affect. As mentioned in the literature, there is often additional distress as survivors find that old coping strategies no longer work (Tedeschi, 1999).

Secondly, as indicated by the findings, participants found it easier to engage in making meaning of why crime happens in general (contextual blame) and what they

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Appendix A

Research Interview Schedule

1. Demographics

Name:

Surname:

Date of Birth:

Residential Area:

Living Circumstances (With whom, house/flat etc.):

Highest Level of Education:

Occupation:

Marital Status:

Dependants:

Home Language:

Race:

Religion:

2. Pre-morbid Functioning

Previous contact with mental health system?

Previous or subsequent traumas? (Nature of trauma and when this occurred):

3. Help- Seeking

Type of crime:

When the crime occurred (date):

Number of sessions attended at Rondebosch SOC:

Number of sessions attended at other counseling services (as a result of the crime/ to deal with your response to the crime):

Any other help-seeking behaviour after the crime:

4. Questions

1. Tell me about your experience of the crime committed against you that resulted in you attending the SOC? (When/ where/how many perpetrators/ were they known or unknown/ extent of physical violence/ extent of injuries/ material loss or damage/ objective and subjective perceived threat to life)

Schema disrupted by the trauma.

2. Have you noticed any changes in yourself during and after the event compared to before the event? (Do you feel different about yourself)
3. Has the event affected other areas of your life and if so in what areas and how? Has the event influenced the life you lead now? (Do you feel less safe in your environment? Have you changed your daily living routines?)
4. Have there been any changes in your relationships with family and friends? Do you view strangers differently?
(Dependency and trust, safety, personal sense of power, independence, esteem and intimacy schema)

Comprehensibility: developing an explanatory account of the trauma, of how and why it happened.

5. How have you made sense of why people commit crimes like this? Have you found yourself wondering why they do these things?
6. How do you make sense of the event happening to you specifically?
7. Is there any other early hardship that you think may have prepared you for this traumatic event?

Significance/Purpose of a traumatic event/ benefits to the self and others?

8. Where do you draw strength from in order to cope with what's happened to you?
9. Has there been anything of value that you have got out of the experience? (Psychologically, spiritually?)
10. What are the hardest things that you feel you are still struggling with as a result of the crime?
11. What did SOC service help you with?

Conclusion

1. Do you feel back to normal in the way you felt prior to the event? How would you know when you are recovered?
2. Do you have any questions for me? Is there anything that you would like to ask me or talk to me about?

Appendix B

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of the process by which victims of crime deal with their experience. This research will help develop the understanding of the process people go through in recovery from the experience of being a victim of crime. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have experienced a crime.

If you think you would like to participate, your counsellor will pass on your name to the researcher, a UCT clinical psychology masters student, Mandy Thacker. She will contact you in 6 – 8 weeks from today and ask you to fill out the attached questionnaire – so please hold on to it! If at that time, you would prefer not to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw. If you do choose to participate, you may also be asked to participate in an interview, which will last approximately one and a half to two hours. In the interview, you will be asked questions about the crime that you have experienced, and your reactions to this event. You will also be asked questions about the counseling you received at the Rondebosch Police Station.

Although some of the questions in the questionnaire and the interview could cause some distress, many people find that talking about stressful experiences, like their experience of crime makes them feel better. Any information obtained during this study will remain absolutely confidential and your story will remain anonymous. You will not be responsible for any costs associated with this study.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

could do to prevent future crime (behavioural self-blame and strategies for identifying unsafe strangers), and they found it easier to engage in strategies that made them feel protected from the worst (comparisons and religious protection). Beginning with questions related to why crime happens in general, and being aware of the strategies engaged in by participants of this study may help therapists facilitate meaning making and the rebuilding of safety, control and predictability schema. Additionally, participants looked for protective behaviours they engaged in during the crime. Helping patients identify actions they engaged in that made them safer may enhance self-worth.

Finally, as indicated by the results of this study, the rebuilding of interpersonal trust and making sense of interpersonal violence may require a greater period of time. In order to facilitate this process it appears it may be necessary to help patients engage in examining the interpersonal aspect of the crime. Questions about why the crime happened to the survivor specifically, and why the survivor believes perpetrators engage in violence, may facilitate this process. As indicated by the literature, characterological self blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), which is harmful, may need to be reframed. Although anger is a normal and healthy part of perpetrator blame, patients need to be cautioned against acting on this feeling (Tedeschi, 1999). It appears from the context specific findings of this study it may be necessary to normalize a tendency to judge and be fearful of strangers based on external characteristics similar to the perpetrator, such as race. Patients may need assurance that this does not mean they have become racist in the traditional sense of the word. Exploring other explanations for violent crime and exploring the societal tendency to minimize violent crime in South Africa may help participants with struggles they may experience with continuing to live in the South African context.

Where and when appropriate, it may also facilitate recovery to explore any possible benefits the patient may have experienced following the experience of the violent crime. To ignore this area may be to deprive some survivors of positive feelings that may facilitate posttraumatic adjustment. On the other hand, exploration of PTG should not be done prescriptively by trauma counsellors, as not all crime survivors experience benefits.

5.5 Conclusion

It is hoped that this research, and particularly the context specific findings, will be of use to those investigating meaning making and interventions for survivors of crime in the South African context. In light of a history of trauma research that has disempowered trauma victims and an apartheid history that normalized violence and human rights violations, it is also hoped that this research will contribute in some way to breaking the denial and silence around the impact of violent crime on South African citizens and broader society. As with any other interpersonal trauma, participants in this study experienced a profound challenge to their assumptive worlds and struggled to make sense of interpersonal violence, particularly where the context they lived in minimized the enormous impact of violent crime on their emotional well-being, and fear of racist schema may have made it difficult to assign blame to the perpetrator. There is little hope of helping violent crime survivors or remedying the violent crime situation in South African society at large unless the impact of criminal violence on survivors and society is widely integrated into individual and social schema (Tedeschi, 1999). It is hoped that this research raises such awareness and “sets the stage for action against the repetition of trauma” (Tedeschi, 1999, p. 334).